

HLOKOMELA

An initiative of the
HOEDSPRUIT TRAINING TRUST

**Farm
Workers
Care for
each other**



What is Hlokomela?

Established in 2005, the Hlokomela project coordinates various health and educational development initiatives for 49 local agricultural businesses associated with the Hoedspruit Training Trust, a not-for-profit organisation that seeks to empower commercial farm workers and their families with a greater sense of responsibility for their personal health, spiritual, and educational development.

Hlokomela's purpose is to improve the health and reduce the vulnerability of migrant and permanent farm workers and their families in the Hoedspruit area to HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis, and other chronic health conditions through improved knowledge, awareness, access to services, and healthier living conditions.

Hlokomela's key governmental and international partners include the;

International Organization for Migration
the Republic of South Africa Department of Health
the Limpopo Department of Health ,the South African Police Service,
the European Union, Department of Agriculture, Starfish, Population Council,
Right to Care, United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
and Maruleng Municipality.

Together against HIV and AIDS.
Lets get tested



Where does Hlokomela work?

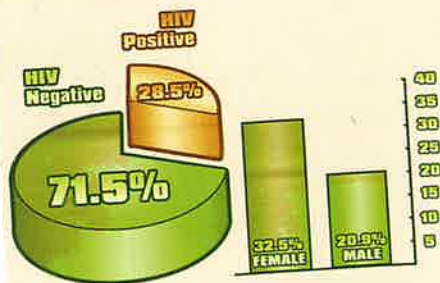
Hlokomela's geographical focus is the Hoedspruit agricultural community in the Maruleng Municipality, Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa, adjacent to the Kruger National Park.

Hoedspruit is predominantly a fruit and game farming area with a large population of seasonal and migrant workers.



How serious is the HIV epidemic in the Hoedspruit farming community?

Research conducted in January 2008 on 10 farms in the Hoedspruit area confirmed the seriousness of the HIV epidemic in the area. It also found farm workers highly vulnerable to HIV infection. The results indicated 29% of farmworkers in the community are infected with HIV, a rate of HIV prevalence, which is considerably higher than that of the general population in Limpopo Province.



The study found young farm workers and female farm workers, especially unmarried women, young women, and women who live away from the farms on which they work, are vulnerable to HIV infection. Moreover, 60% of all employees and 53% of HIV positive employees do not know their HIV status, while a high proportion of employees report never using a condom. This research builds on earlier studies that also revealed alarming levels of unsafe sexual behaviour among farm workers.

See www.iom.org.za and www.htt.org.za for more info



The challenge to commercial farming

The agricultural sector provides 11% of South Africa's formal employment, as well as 27% of informal employment - but despite this, the industry's response to HIV and AIDS has been slow and inadequate compared to the scale of the problem.

Consequently the following are evident:

1. Increased absenteeism:

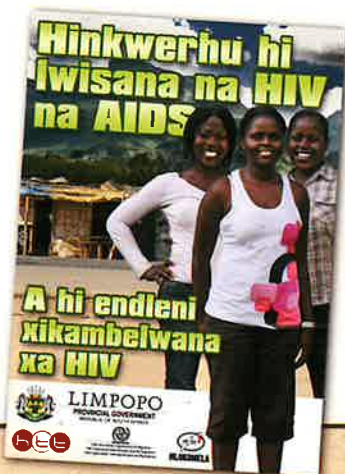
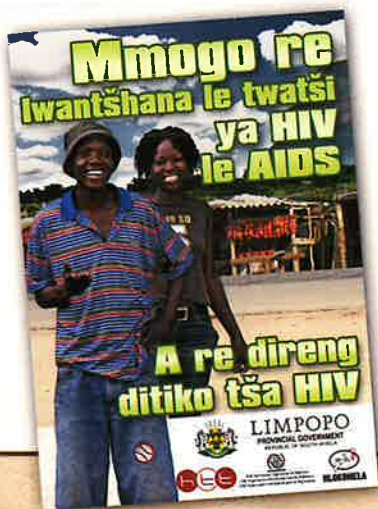
- Due to workers' illness
- To attend to ill friends and family
- To attend funerals of friends and family
- To take care of orphaned children.

2. Reduced productivity, which impacts profitability, return on investment and increased stress in the workplace.

3. Loss of critical skills and trained labour.

4. Increasing labour costs, e.g. training new staff, health care, funeral costs.

5. Reduced supply of local labour, resulting in the dependence on migrant labour and outside labour recruitment labour services.



Equitable solution



Hlokomela's partnership with commercial farms in the Hoedspruit area is not only a humanitarian response to an unfolding human tragedy - it also makes sound business sense. A study conducted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) compared the costs of operating HIV education, counselling and testing, and staff time spent on the programme, with the costs of HIV and AIDS to the company, including employee turnover, training new staff, loss of productivity, absenteeism and funeral costs. The report found workplace HIV and AIDS programmes reduced employee absenteeism, turnover rates and loss of productivity, and assisted employees to cope with discrimination and learn about prevention.

Six of the seven companies showed net benefits for their HIV and AIDS programmes, amounting to an average of \$47 per employee in 2006. Sensible, informed workplace HIV and AIDS policies and programmes, appropriate training interventions and the roll-out of preventative treatment programmes make for a more productive agricultural industry and enhanced rural socio-economic development.



Whom does Hlokomela benefit?

Farms in the focus area usually employ only about 10-50 permanent workers but a large number of seasonal workers are employed during the picking season. Many of these seasonal workers are migrants from other areas of South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and elsewhere in Southern Africa. Hlokomela currently provides services to workers and their families on 49 farms in the Hoedspruit community, including a number of employees on commercial game reserves in the area adjacent to Kruger National Park and elsewhere in the region.



An estimated 8 000 farm workers and their families benefit directly from Hlokomela services. Each month, Hlokomela helps approximately 200 people access voluntary HIV counselling and testing (VCT) services, and helps 150 people living with HIV receive antiretroviral therapy (ART). It is worth noting that of all the workers from the participating farms who have been tested for HIV, more than 60% have tested in the short time Hlokomela has been offering VCT outreach services. Importantly, Hlokomela's communication programmes engage directly with farm workers to promote safer sexual practice and wellness, and work with the broader community to create a caring, supportive environment.



What does Hlokomela do?

Hlokomela seeks to contribute to the reduction of HIV prevalence and the impact of AIDS among commercial farm workers and their families through an integrated programme of prevention, treatment and care:

- Working with farm management to assist in developing a healthier work environment, and to develop and implement workplace wellness policies and programmes that include HIV and AIDS
- Providing Primary Health Care by training and mentoring farm workers as caregivers (Nompilos)
- Sensitising, training, and mentoring male role models to address issues such as gender based violence, transactional sex, and poor health-seeking behaviour in men
- Developing and implementing an integrated social change communication (SCC) programme. This includes peer communication (face-to-face dialogue between Nompilos and farm workers), peer education and the participatory development of local communication tools such as billboards, pamphlets, newspaper articles, murals and other materials. The aim is to build individual and collective esteem and create a supportive environment of caring that enables individuals to reduce high-risk behaviour and lead healthier lives
- Organising and implementing recreational programmes to increase social participation and improve the quality of farm workers' lives
- Establishing and running wellness clinics to provide information, condoms, and health care services and referrals, including VCT and ART, to farm workers and their families
- Improving the nutrition of sick workers by providing them with food grown in a community vegetable and herb garden
- Building partnerships with public and private entities to build capacity, attract resources, improve access to services and enhance sustainability.



What is Hlokomela's dream?

In addition to continually improving our services and making a real impact in preventing HIV and fostering wellness in the farming community, Hlokomela wants to establish a Hospice/step down facility to offer a programme of specialised home-based palliative care to terminally ill patients and support to their families. We would like to provide this care and support to people in the last phases of incurable disease, making sure their lives remain as meaningful and comfortable as possible.

What do people think about Hlokomela?

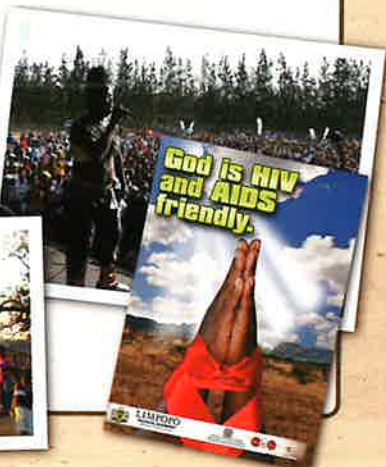
- A recent independent study found the overwhelming majority of farm workers trust the confidentiality of the services offered through the Hlokomela project. (See www.iom.org.za and www.htt.org.za)
- In a competition held on the local Thobela FM radio station, listeners chose Hlokomela as the project making the most difference in their community.
- Hlokomela received a cash contribution from Shoprite/Checkers as Community Builder in 2007.
- Hlokomela received the prestigious Silver Impumelelo Innovation Award in 2008, a national award granted by South Africa's Impumelelo Innovations Award Trust to recognise innovations in government and public-private partnerships, which enhance the quality of life of poor communities and address key developmental issues of national concern.
- Maruleng Municipality nominated Hlokomela as the best Non-Profit Organisation in the Mopani district; Hlokomela won the award in August 2008, over 43 others nominated.
- Christine du Preez, director of Hlokomela, was nominated and selected as a finalist in the individual category "The Southern Africa Trust and Mail and Guardian 2008 Drivers of Change - Investing in the Future" awards.
- Hlokomela received a cash award from the Mopani District Executive Mayor Charity Cup 2008 in July 2009.

In addition to receiving recognition in South Africa, Hlokomela has accepted invitations to present at international forums where we were able to fly the flag for the Hoedspruit farming community. At the XVII International AIDS Conference in Mexico City from 3-8 August 2008, Hlokomela showcased its service delivery model. The presentation raised awareness about the HIV and AIDS epidemic in Limpopo and highlighted how our partnership with the commercial farming sector is helping to make a real difference to the lives of the people of Maruleng.

What are Hlokomela's new activities ?



The community garden at Bavaria Estate is utilizing sustainable conservation farming methods, which ensures a certain level of local food security. The vegetables produced in the garden are used to prepare food parcels for HIV-positive farm workers who have been identified as requiring nutritional supplements. Surplus vegetables are sold at a food stall near the farm and at the local Spar, Pick and Pay supermarkets and game lodges in the Hoedspruit area. The revenue generated is used to improve the garden's facilities, and to purchase drip irrigation equipment, seeds and seedlings. Hlokomela Community Garden Projects has continued to expand both in size and in service delivery, with grants from the National Development Agency (NDA). We have conducted a two-day training on "Farming God's Way" - the conservation farming method - for 40 community members, and in July 2008 initiated a Fresh Herb Garden project. The herb garden is an income generating opportunity as all revenues derived are used to address sustainability and growth of the existing Hlokomela programmes.



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