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Aids in Sub-Saharan Africa

By: Brittney Earle, Region III Vice President

Nowhere in the world has the impact of HIV/AIDS been more severe than in Sub-Saharan Africa. AIDS is caused by the virus HIV. AIDS was unknown to Africa about 25 years ago and is now the number one killer disease in Sub-Saharan Africa. Since the start of the epidemic, over 39 million people have been infected with HIV in this region of Africa.

It is estimated that 29.4 million people are currently living with HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa. That is two-thirds of HIV/AIDS cases reported globally. In the regions of Zimbabwe and Botswana, one in four adults carries the virus. A child born in Zambia or Zimbabwe today is more likely than not to die of AIDS.

Africa, however, is no stranger to diseases that kill. Malaria still claims about as many African lives as AIDS, and preventable childhood diseases kill millions of others. What sets AIDS apart, however, is its unprecedented impact many adults in the prime of their working and parenting lives; therefore, decimating workforce. AIDS also fractures and impoverishes families, orphans millions, and shreds the fabric of communities. The gap between AIDS in Africa and the world will most likely increase in the next century. Other countries with the use of medical innovation are now trying to decrease the growth of AIDS/HIV in Africa.



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Placida Karigendo, severely ill with an AIDS-related skin infection, is watched over by her brother at their home near Bukoba in northwest Tanzania. Placida's father died from AIDS and her mother is very ill. Placida contracted the disease from a blood transfusion when she was just two years old. (June 97)



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"I have been sick for 10 years now," says Joseph, here carried by his mother Dorika outside their home in Bugarika, in Tanzania's Great Lakes region. "When it is warm and dry I spend my days sitting outside my house. I read the bible and people pass by and talk with me." AIDS was first documented in the Great Lakes region of central Africa 15 years ago. (June 97)



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AIDS patients Lovemore Zamara, 15, and Lauren Toga, 11, spend their days at the Mashambanzou Care Trust in Harare, Zimbabwe.



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Mookhona Hlabou, 29, who is HIV positive, lives with his 21-member family in a two-room squatter shack. Mookhona said, "I was given some drugs which make me feel better, but I cannot afford to buy anymore. I have heard that in overseas countries the government provides drugs and food free for people with AIDS, but here in South Africa, there is nothing now. I am unhappy that people overseas can get better from the good drugs they are given, while we in South Africa have to die."