

WOMEN' s STORIES IN THE HOMELAND OF MANDELA

THE EASTERN CAPE IS ONE OF THE POOREST PROVINCE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

IN RURAL AREAS WOMEN LIVE IN TRADITIONAL XHOSA DWELLINGS: SMALL CIRCULAR HUTS MADE OF CLAY, WITH A THATCHED ROOF. JOBS ARE SCARCE, THESE WOMEN ARE ABLE TO RAISE THEIR KIDS THANKS TO LITTLE GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES.

THE PROVINCE IS ALSO ONE OF THE AREAS MOST AFFECTED BY HIV EPIDEMIC, WHICH IN SOME RURAL AREAS MAY AFFECT UP TO 29% OF THE POPULATION, OR EVEN HIGHER.

THANKS TO THE ACTIVITIES OF SPECIALIZED CLINICS AND TO AWARENESS AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM, WOMEN LEARNED HOW TO LIVE WITH THE DISEASE AND HOW TO PRESERVE THE LIFE OF THEIR CHILDREN, STRICTLY FOLLOWING PRENATAL CARE.

IN THE BODENI CLINIC WOMEN JOINED TOGETHER IN A SUPPORT GROUP, IN ORDER TO HELP, INFORM AND RAISE THE AWARENESS ABOUT HIV-AIDS IN THEIR OWN VILLAGE AND IN THE SURROUNDINGS ONES.

NONCEDIWE, NOPELO AND NUPUMEZELA WELCOMED US IN THEIR SHELTER, TO TELL A STORY, HOW THEY HAVE BEEN SAVED.

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THE COUNTRYSIDE AROUND QUNO, THE VILLAGE WHERE MANDELA SPENT HIS CHILDHOOD, IN THE EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE.



THE EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE IS ONE OF THE POOREST IN THE COUNTRY. 64.5% OF THE POPULATION LIVES BELOW THE THRESHOLD OF POVERTY. THE REGION IS ALSO INFAMOUS FOR THE HIGH RATE OF HIV-AIDS SPREAD AMONG THE POPULATION, ONE OF THE LARGEST IN THE SOUTH-AFRICA. (FLAGSTAFF, ZA)



TRADITIONALLY, PEOPLE SAY THAT AIDS PATIENTS HAVE THREE NAMES: H, I, V. ZANDI AND NOPELO DECIDED TO COPE WITH THE DISEASE BY JOINING A SUPPORT GROUP AND DECLARE THEIR CONDITION BY WEARING THE T-SHIRT HIV-POSITIVE. (FLAGSTAFF, ZA)



BODENI CLINIC IS ONE OF THE 13 CLINICS SPREAD IN THE AREA OF FLAGSTAFF AND LUSIKISIKI. THE GOAL OF THIS NETWORK IS TO SPREAD AND IMPROVE THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM, FOCUSING ON HIV-AIDS SCREENING, PREVENTION, AND TREATMENT. (FLAGSTAFF, ZA)



THE WAITING ROOM OF BODENI CLINIC EVERY DAY RANKS OF WOMEN GO TO THE CLINIC TO UNDERGO THE SCREENING PROGRAM OF HIV-AIDS, THE "HIV COUNSELING AND TESTING". (FLAGSTAFF, ZA)



THE VOLUNTEERS WOMEN DURING A HOME-VISIT TO ONE OF THE PATIENTS. COMPOSED OF LOCAL WOMEN, THE SUPPORT GROUP IS ESSENTIAL TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT HIV-AIDS IN RURAL AREAS. (FLAGSTAFF, ZA)



THE POPULAR BELIEF THAT SEXUAL INTERCOURSE WITH A VIRGIN MAY HEAL A HIV-INFECTED MAN IS THE CAUSE OF MANY ABUSES ON GIRL CHILD, ESPECIALLY IN RURAL AREAS. (FLAGSTAFF, ZA)



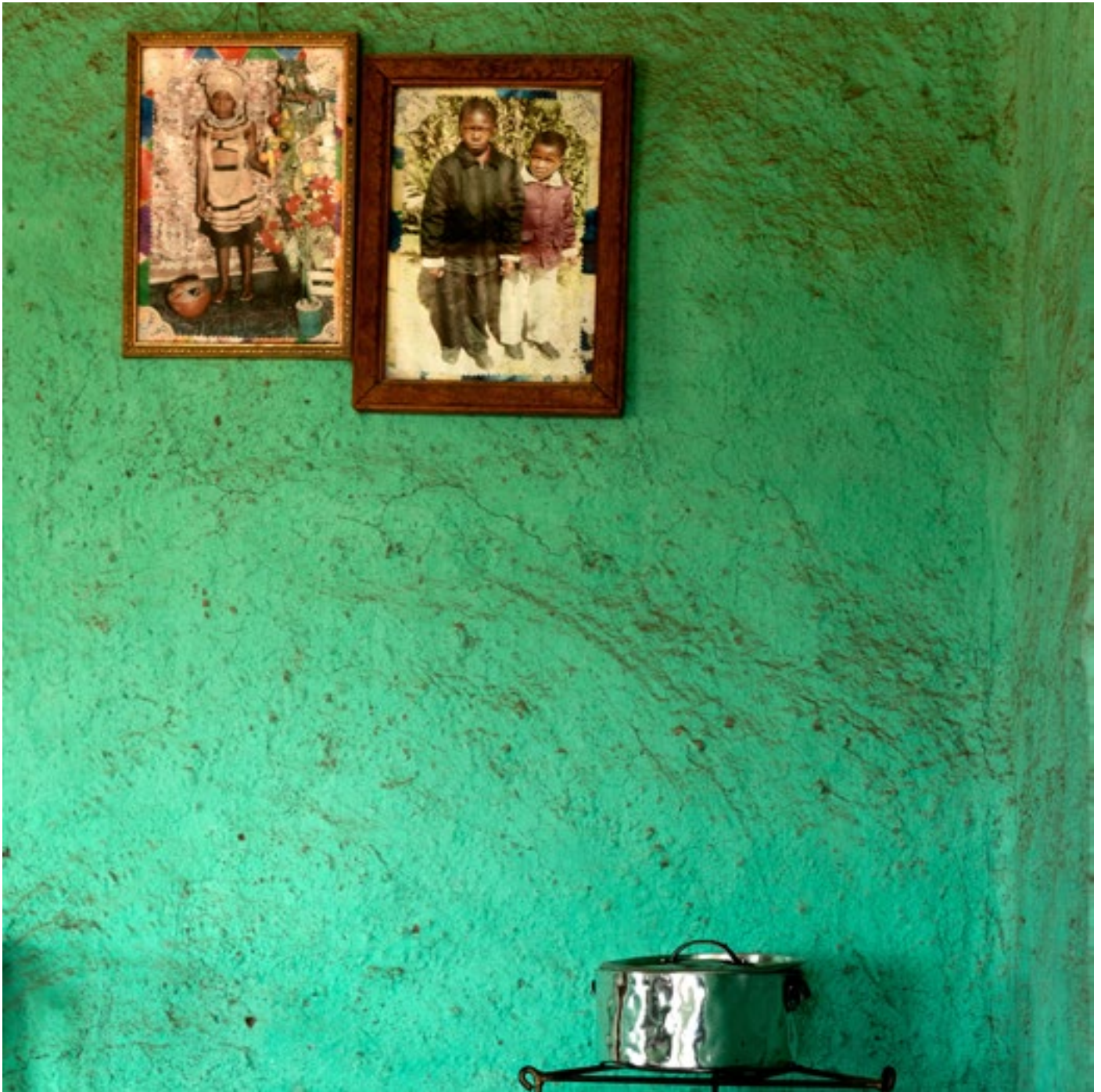
"WE DEMAND JUSTICE FOR ALL. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRL CHILD MUST END NOW" IS WRITTEN ON THE BACK OF THE HIV-POSITIVE T-SHIRT WEARING BY ZANDI, ONE OF THE SUPPORT GROUP WOMEN. THE POPULAR BELIEF THAT SEXUAL INTERCOURSE WITH A VIRGIN MAY HEAL A HIV-INFECTED MAN IS THE CAUSE OF MANY ABUSES ON GIRL CHILD, ESPECIALLY IN RURAL AREAS. (FLAGSTAFF, ZA)



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NONCEDIWE MGOMBANE, 34 YEARS OLD. SHE IS A WIDOW AND MOTHER OF FOUR. SHE DISCOVERED TO BE HIV-POSITIVE IN 2003 WHEN, DURING HER FIRST PREGNANCY, SHE WENT TO THE CLINIC TO RECEIVE ANTENATAL CARE. (FLAGSTAFF, ZA)



AS MANY OTHER UNEMPLOYED WOMEN, NONCEDIWE SURVIVES THANKS TO THE GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES: 190 RAND (ABOUT 15 €) PER MONTH PER CHILD.



THANKS TO PMTCT THERAPY (PREVENTING MOTHER TO CHILD TRANSMISSION) ALL HER CHILDREN ARE HEALTHY. NONCEDIWE STARTED TAKING ANTIRETROVIRAL DRUGS IN 2010. SHE GOES TO BODENI CLINIC EVERY MONTHLY FOR A ROUTINE CHECKUPS AND ONCE A YEAR FOR THE CD4 TEST. (FLAGSTAFF, ZA).



NOPELO NTLANGO, 41 YEAR OLD. SHE HAVE 4 CHILDREN AND DISCOVERED TO BE HIV-POSITIVE DURING HER FIRST PREGNANCY, IN 2003. SHE STARTED IMMEDIATELY THE PMTCT PROPHYLAXIS. THANKS TO THE SUPPORT GROUP SHE UNDERSTOOD THAT AIDS IS NOT THE END OF A WOMAN'S LIFE. (FLAGSTAFF, ZA)



NOPELO SAYS IS VERY IMPORTANT TO INVOLVING MEN AND BOYS IN HIV PREVENTION. WHEN HIS SONS WILL REACH THE APPROPRIATE AGE, SHE WILL TEACHES THEM ALL THE NECESSARY ABOUT SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TEST. (FLAGSTAFF, ZA)



NOPELO TOGETHER WITH HER CHILDREN. DURING THE EIGHTH MONTH OF HER SECOND PREGNANCY SHE WENT TO THE HOSPITAL TO REQUEST A CESAREAN DELIVERY. SHE WANTED TO AVOID A BIRTH AT HOME WHICH MEANS A HIGH RISK TO TRANSMIT THE HIV VIRUS TO THE CHILD. (FLAGSTAFF, ZA)



THANKS TO PRENATAL CARE, THE DAUGHTER OF NUPUMZELA DIDN'T CONTRACT THE HIV VIRUS. IN RURAL AREAS, THE HIGH RATE OF HOME BIRTHS IT'S A SERIOUS PROBLEM. A FAILURE IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF DRUGS AT THE TIME OF BIRTH ENDANGERS THE LIFE OF THE CHILD. (FLAGSTAFF, ZA)



DESPITE SHE FOLLOWED THE PMTCT AND PCR PROPHYLAXIS, A TORRENTIAL RAIN PREVENTED HER TO REACH THE HOSPITAL DURING LABOR. FOR THIS REASON THE HEALTH OF HER CHILD IS STILL UNCERTAIN: TAKING THE MEDICINE ONLY FEW HOURS LATE AFTER CHILDBIRTH CAN AFFECT THE ENTIRE PROPHYLAXIS. (FLAGSTAFF, ZA)



ONE OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE HIV-AIDS PANDEMIC IS THE DISINTEGRATION OF FAMILY COMMUNITIES. ONLY IN THE EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 350,000 CHILDREN WHICH LOST ONE OR BOTH PARENTS BECAUSE OF AIDS.



DURING THE LAST 10 YEARS THE LEVEL OF AWARENESS, INFORMATION AND EDUCATION CONCERNING HIV- AIDS HAS IMPROVED IN RURAL AREAS. EVERY MONTH SOME 213 PEOPLE (86% WOMEN) AND 557 CHILDREN ARE VISITED OR VACCINATED IN THE AREA OF FLAGSTAFF AND LUSIKISIKI.