

**ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT MORE THAN 30% OF SD'S POPULATION IS HIV+ ACCORDING TO STATISTICS,**

# NO 'BLING' IN THIS

BY SUNDAY REPORTER

**NHILANGANO** - The Shiselweni congregation of the Swaziland Reformed Church made a decision about 10 years ago, not to invest in their own comfort but to the needs of the community.

According to Arnu van Wyngaard, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the church, these include those who are suffering from the effects of HIV/AIDS, the impoverished, orphans and those who have no voice of their own.

Presently, almost 1 200 volunteers (meaning that they receive no salary, including every single Board member) are part of Shiselweni Home-Based Care.

They reach almost 4 500 people per month, feed 400 OVCs daily, run four preschools and further hand out wheelchairs to invalids who would otherwise have been forced to spend the remainder of their lives in a bed.

Van Wyngaard said should these caregivers have received even a meagre amount of E500 per month for their work, it would have cost more than E7 million per year.

"Yet this congregation does this work because they truly believe that this is what Jesus would have done if He had been physically living on earth today," he said.

On the church's official website, Wyngaard said after serving in Swaziland for 21 years in the Shiselweni congregation of the Swaziland Reformed Church, they were privileged when God called their congregation, in 2006, to follow a new vision, which was to reach out to those suffering from HIV/AIDS.

"What started as a small group of people, passionately caring for the sick and the dying, gradually grew

## SWAZILAND'S HIV/AIDS HISTORY (ACCORDING TO THE SWAZILAND REFORMED CHURCH)

In 1986, the first three people who tested positive for HIV were found in Swaziland. A year later, the three had increased to 10 and one person had full-blown AIDS.

After five years (1991) there were 584 people who were HIV positive, 62 with full-blown AIDS and 43 people had already died due to AIDS-related illnesses.

Swaziland has a population of approximately 1.2 million. If the 42.6 per cent of pregnant women who are HIV positive should be a fairly accurate indication of the total population who are HIV positive, then it means that more than 400 000 people have this disease at the moment.

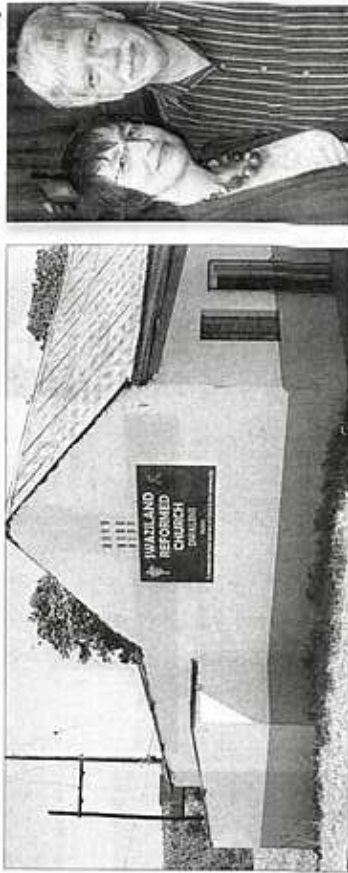
In the Swaziland newspapers, where notice is given of the death of people, sometimes more than two pages are used up by these notices. Often, a photo is also included with the notice.

With the exception of a few of those who had died, most of the photos are of young people, in the prime of their lives, who had died. Everybody knows the cause of their death, even though it is never mentioned.

Among the pregnant women that were tested recently, it was found that more than 42 per cent of those between the ages of 20-24 were HIV positive. "We believe the church has a specific role to play," reads the church's website.

"The church cannot do research on new vaccines. The church cannot take over the role of doctors and nurses. However, we believe, as Christians, we have the task to comfort these people, in the same way that Christ would have done, and to bring to those who are dying and to their family members, a message of hope, not only of the everlasting life in Jesus Christ, but also that we care about them while they are still alive."

- While many churches take from congregations, this one gives
- No salaries for Board members but more assistance for the needy



The Swaziland Reformed Church which is run by Arnu and Wilma van Wyngaard (left pic).



The first group of 32 volunteers who worked with the Swaziland Reformed Church. (Courtesy pic)

into a small army of volunteers who want to serve God and their neighbours in a new way, not with the expectation of being rewarded for what they are doing, but doing it because they believe that this is what Jesus would have done if He had still been living on earth as a person today," he said.

On the question of how serious

the case. However, the government is trying its utmost to find accurate statistics regarding the position about AIDS in Swaziland.

"All indications are that more than 30 per cent of the population in Swaziland is HIV positive. Large numbers of people are dying daily because of AIDS-related illnesses.

"We do not have access to accurate statistics indicating the number of people dying due to AIDS-related illnesses but all over Swaziland, our church members are saying people are dying at a rate that they have never experienced in the history of Swaziland.

"In a recent survey, it was found that in 60 per cent of homes in a certain area, someone had died in the previous 12 months. Most of them died as a direct result of AIDS.

According to the latest census indications, more than 10 per cent of the total population consists of orphans - that is 115 000 orphans!

## No expenditure on luxury

**M**BABANE - While many churches are into expensive places of worship and members compete with fashionable clothes and fancy cars, this is not the case with the Swaziland Reformed Church.

"As a faith-based non-profit organisation, we feel that we have an obligation, both to those supporting us (or considering supporting us) as well as towards God to be totally transparent regarding our financial position," the directors said.

"Income and expenses are controlled through universally accepted accounting methods and after the end of the financial year (last day of February) a full audit is done by an external auditing company. The financial reports are then published

on the website.

"One of the things which we are extremely proud of, is the way in which we handle our finances. It is generally considered that up to 30 per cent of expenses in an NGO may be used for administration and overheads. In the 2013/2014 financial year, less than one per cent of our total expenses were used for administrative purposes while 70 per cent was spent on our four focus areas.

"Any individual or organisation contributing financially towards this work can, therefore, be assured that their money will be used responsibly, will not be spent on luxury items and will reach the people for whom it was intended - those suffering from HIV and AIDS and the people taking care of them."

## HOW TO GIVE TO THE CHURCH

**DONATIONS FROM SWAZILAND**  
Name: Shiselweni HBC  
Bank: FNB Matsapha  
Branch Code: 281064  
Account: 62391699900  
Type: Savings  
Description: Caregivers

**DONATIONS FROM S.-AFRICA:**  
Name: Shiselweni Reformed Home-Based Care  
Bank: ABSA  
Branch: Piet Relief  
Branch code: 632005  
Account Number: 9232 019 533  
Type: Savings  
Description: Caregivers / Medical Kits / Donation (Whichever is applicable in your case). If, as a potential donor, you are living in a country other than South Africa or the USA, it is still possible to

contribute towards the ministry in Swaziland. You can arrange with your bank for a wire transfer. For this, you will need to supply them with the swift code of the receiving bank. The swift code is the unique identification code of a particular bank. The church recommends that you print out this page before going to your bank.

Bank: ABSA  
Branch: Piet Relief  
Branch code: 632005  
Account Number: 9232 019 533  
Name: Shiselweni Reformed Home-Based Care  
Address: P.O. Box 886, Piet Relief, 2390, South Africa  
Swift Code: ABSA ZA JJ  
Bank Address: Private Bag X7293, Witbank, 1035, South Africa

**AND THERE ARE ABOUT 115 000 ORPHANS**

# CHURCH