

"When Nakekela first opened, the community avoided coming here. They thought there might be a curse, for people are dying here. Nowadays more and more visit the information centre at the clinic for help and assistance." They see people leaving here in a wonderful state of health. They now know it is a place of hope, where help is offered and where sick people's medical condition improves with care. Some of our old patients now take responsibility for other HIV/AIDS sufferers by transporting them to Nakekela for evaluation and assistance," says Babette.

On Fridays Nakekela is visited by a pastor who has completed his studies at MTC two years ago. Up till the end of July he only cared for the spiritual needs of the patients. Now he also agreed to visit Nakekela every Wednesday afternoon to do scripture reading and prayer with the staff and to be available if some of the staff members need his emotional and spiritual assistance.



"With the help of our open-handed donors, we were also able to establish a prayer room where families can find peace while dealing with the trauma of being part of a dying patient's life. Sometimes family members are so devastated seeing

their loved ones in agony, that they upset all the other patients. It is good to have a place where they can mourn and grieve far away from other sufferers," Babette says. "Staff members often need a place to get grip on themselves again and regain strength to continue with this grueling task."

There is also a quiet room where patients having a hard time, or dying patients, are moved to in order not to upset the other patients.

For news hints on any of MCDC's activities, please Phone Kobie on 083 604 0168 or e-mail to [Kobie.coetzee@gmail.com](mailto:Kobie.coetzee@gmail.com)



# MCDC

MaSiBaMBiSaNe

News/Nuus



## Nakekela is a place of hope.

Since the opening of Nakekela in 2003, 289 patients were admitted and 30% were assisted to such an extent that they were able to return home. Nakekela is a step down facility for people living with AIDS.

"If people think they have to come to Nakekela to die, they are mistaken," says Babette Grobler, newly appointed manager of the centre.

"Nakekela is a place where patients laugh and sing praises to God. After being here for a while, they can even stand up and dance with us. Their families carried them in here pathetic bundles of weakness and pain. They can't believe what the simple care, tenderness and love they get here, are doing to the family member.



"Here one has to be a believer, but not a saint," Babette says smiling. "One is working with the most basic needs of life and you can't be high and mighty about that."

Emma Masanabo, the staff nurse, agrees.

"It is so good to see how people find God here, after they had no hope for life. Within a short while they gather strength to go on. In their own state of weakness, they try to help others. They bring water to the thirsty. They give a hand at walking, even if their own legs are wobbly and they have to support themselves against the walls. These people become friends for life.

"One patient was so sick, she could not get out of bed. Then a child with AIDS was admitted to Nakekela. The



sick patient started to show interest in this child, cared for her and helped her in any way she could. Eventually the child died, but the patient has recovered to such an extent that she was able to go home and now live a normal life. The sick child gave her a purpose to live for. These are just some of the miracles that happen here day by day."

"In 2007 we invited some of the cured patients to come to Nakekela and celebrate life. They went into the wards to encourage the patients and to show them: Look, we are alive! It was wonderful to see how the patients regained their hope for life. Now ex-patients come here regularly to encourage the very sick and hopeless in the clinic

Babette points to the garden they have started in the open square between the wings of the newly added wards. "We planted some hardy plants here, because water is very scarce, but it is wonderful to see the patients' eyes light up when we move them out here on the verandah. Here they can warm their cold legs

and feet in the sunshine and enjoy the flowers in the garden. Many of our patients were locked up in their cold iron shackles without seeing anybody for days. In the African culture many people believe an AIDS patient is possessed by evil spirits. The patient is abandoned to die."

### Garden of Health and Gardener of Compassion.

People living with AIDS in the community can come to Nakekela once a week to receive a bag of fresh vegetables. Approximately 70 bags of vegetables are distributed monthly.



Jeremiah here on the picture, started as the gardener but now he also does wonderful work organizing visits of the patients to the KwaMhlanga hospital. He makes appointments with the doctors, so the patients don't need to sit in queues for long hours. Sometimes the patients are too sick to

concentrate on what the doctors say, but Jeremiah listens and tells the staff at Nakekela what to do. He encourages, comforts and supports the patients and brings them safely back to Nakekela.

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