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Empowering People to Change the World!

WORLD CHANGERS APPROACH TO HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is a pandemic that is crippling the African continent and unfortunately it is getting worse. In KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, the infection rate is among the highest in the World – with statistics ranging from 25% - 50% of sexually active adults infected. Fortunately, there is a lot of awareness worldwide about the problem and people are eager to do something about it. Unfortunately, however, people don't generally realise the extent of the problem. The extent of the problem is not just about how many people are infected now, how many will likely be infected and the possible affects of the disease (such as orphans, loss of labour force, despair as a result of widespread death, etc.), but it is also about the root causes of the disease. Many people are well aware of the affects of the disease, but not very aware of the causes, beyond the obvious (the way it is transmitted, sexual behaviour, etc.). The deeper causes of the disease are much more complex and require a much more comprehensive solution than what most people think. There has been a great deal of HIV/AIDS awareness in Africa, and most people know what is being taught about the disease and how it is transmitted. But, in general, people's behaviours are not changing. The question to be asked is, "Why?" The people of World Changers believe that the answer to this question lies in addressing the deeper causes of HIV/AIDS – unemployment, poverty, hopelessness, crime, family breakdown and other core social ills. Identifying the root causes is half the battle. The other half is doing something about addressing these root causes.

Much is being done to address the problem of HIV/AIDS. The government, NGO's and others have tried many various approaches to tackle this problem, with varying degrees of success. There has tended to be more of an emphasis on tackling the fruits of the problems. For example, hospices for those dying with AIDS, promotion of condom use rather than lifestyle change, orphanages for kids with no parents and more social food and aid grants for the poor. What is ultimately needed, however, is a holistic approach that still tackles the fruits of the problems, but focuses on dealing with the root problems.

To deal with the roots of South Africa's problems, people's minds are in need of renewal. People need hope to overcome seemingly hopeless situations, vision to claim a better future, initiative to make something out of nothing, and integrity to counter corruption and broken value systems.

The leaders of World Changers Academy (WCA) believe that these attributes are the key missing components to bringing positive transformation to people, communities, nations and the world. Without focusing on these core values, people will forever be mopping up a floor wet due to a leak in the faucet without fixing the leak. Also, within South Africa there is a great resource of skilled, principled and experienced people. These human resources need to be harnessed to empower the disadvantaged.

If people are unemployed, they lose self-esteem and hope, turning to loose sexual activity, drugs and crime. If people have had poor family backgrounds and have not learned to deal with

their past wounds, they walk through life crippled by their past. If crime is high in the country, it deters investment, and results in less jobs available for the unemployed. When many people die of AIDS, it disrupts the labour force, especially when people of high skill levels are sick and/or die. With many parents dying of AIDS, many family units are getting more broken, resulting in more dysfunctional families that are breeding grounds for the same social problems mentioned above. All of the social ills are inter-related. To address one ill – we need to comprehensively address them all. WCA focuses on changing people's attitudes and behaviours, dealing the internal "world" of the mind, the heart and the spirit, to be effective agents of change in the external "world" around them. This is foundational, yet it is still not a total solution. Without people dealing with other aspects of the problems and working together, the leaking tap will never be fixed and the water on the floor will become a flood out of control that no amount of effort and resources can fix. Great effort is needed, and it is needed now. Loving South Africa, which focuses on partnering with projects dealing with AIDS at a comprehensive level, is the kind of collaborative initiative that is needed to deal with HIV/AIDS and the other social ills effectively.