

# Discover News-sheet for colleagues in Africa



January 2018

## AIDS free, productive and empowered communities

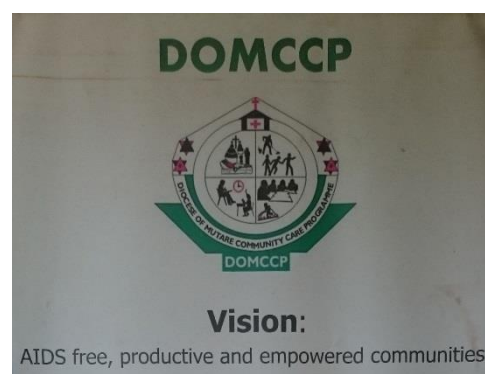
Dear Friends

Before Christmas I spent several days with the Diocese of Mutare Community Care Programme (DOMCCP) in Zimbabwe. I had been there on three occasions previously when I ran training seminars with Joachem Nyamande. Since 2014, Joachem has been made the Director of DOMCCP, studied part-time for a doctorate and has been awarded the prize of best Zimbabwean NGO Director of the year 2017.

DOMCCP's vision is to have AIDS free, productive and empowered people and communities.

That means they:

1. help individuals and groups to become healthy, with herbal remedies and appropriate referrals to hospitals for ARV drugs and other treatments.
2. Provide or arrange training appropriate to the needs, abilities and wishes of the individual or group.
3. offer support to enable those individuals or groups to earn a living and thus become self-reliant.



For example:

1. **Memory Sithole**, 43, lives in a Mutare suburb. Ten years ago, she was in a terrible state; she had TB and was tested HIV positive with a CD4 cell count of 246. She found her status hard to take and isolated herself. But then her contact with DOMCCP gave her hope and health. Now her CD4 cell count is over 1000 and she is very active, productive and empowered. How did this come about?



Memory Sithole in her garden

1. In 2007 she was treated at the local hospital for TB and at DOMCCP her haemorrhoids were treated with with *Artemisia annua* tea and yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*).

2. She joined an AIDS support group in which problems could be shared openly. She incorporated moringa and many fruits into her diet and drank lemongrass and rosemary tea.
3. In 2009 she started taking ARV drugs, which are free of charge in Zimbabwe.
4. She attended a one-year course at Mutare Polytechnic in “Early Childhood Development” as preparation for working as a pre-school teacher.
5. She attended a DOMCCP course in Business Management, to develop the skills needed to run her centre.

Today she is blooming. She has her own small business as a pre-school teacher in which she looks after 15 children aged 3 to 6 every weekday morning and has a small garden full of flowers and medicinal plants.

2. A group of 10 people living with HIV in a rural area keep bees. They have 26 beehives in a fenced woodland. In pouring rain I watched them plant 150 seedlings of flowering trees, which should provide nourishment for the bees.

But they do not only keep bees, which is a project to improve their livelihoods. They

- discuss and tackle gender issues, especially gender based violence.
- are all members of a savings and lending group.
- take their HIV seriously, by being regularly tested for CD4 count and viral load (at least every 3 months), boosting their immunity with good nutrition and exercise and treating infections whenever possible with natural treatments.
- conserve trees. They plant gum trees for firewood and collect dead wood. Under their influence the local community has agreed not to cut any trees.



The bee-keepers proudly showing off the last of 150 seedlings planted in a natural, protected woodland

The group was clearly highly motivated. Their honey and honey wine were delicious!

Becoming AIDS free and healthy is one thing – developing a productive livelihood is the next priority. In these examples at least, DOMCCP is succeeding.

With best wishes for your lives and work in 2018

Keith Lindsey