Botswana is one of the countries that truly deserves a pat on the back for the continued strive in the fight against HIV/AIDS. We have really come full circle in terms of awareness and treatment of the disease.

I remember the years when homesteads used to be permanently closed as the disease wiped out an entire family leaving in its wake despair and hopelessness, days when the only people left in villages were grandparents and orphans. Personally I remember one granny in my village wailing uncontrollably as we buried her fifth and last child, all victims of the dreaded scourge. Back then the stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS was terrible to say the least. One couldn’t just divulge their status in fear of the suffocating stigma of fear and prejudice, so our beloved brothers and sisters continued to perish silently at the hands of this unforgiving disease.

We have since made positive and remarkable strides, moving away from those archaic mentalities of stigmatization. Thanks to the likes of former president Festus Mogae who fought vigilantly to demystify this disease. Many of you will remember young Nkosi Xolani Johnson of South Africa. The little hero that gave HIV/AIDS a face and woke us from our slumber of ignorance. To me, that little boy is a hero that fought the good fight until he took his last breath at the heart breaking age of 12. [http://zar.co.za/nkosi.htm] That was a reality check for many of us who were in denial about the disease.

In light of all these, it is no wonder the government of Botswana took the issue of HIV seriously thereby dedicating the whole month of September annually to prayers against it. Perhaps we need this reminder, that much as the situation has improved we shouldn’t forget lest we fall into the same abyss again. Needless to say even today some of our brothers and sisters continue to struggle with the disease.

As we read this bulletin, I implore each and every one of us to introspect and remember our loved ones and also remind ourselves of the eminent dangers we continue to face at the hand of this disease.

Guest Editor

Month of Prayer Against HIV and AIDS - Building Botswana through Commitment to Behaviour Change: Stop AIDS, Keep the Promise.
AT THE HEAVENS MERCY

With Makarov Abotseng

Recently His Excellency the President of the Republic of Botswana Lt. Gen. Seretse Khama Ian Khama has appealed for rain prayers.

He made a public announcement that “all Batswana across all religious denominations should pray for rain for the whole month of September, and that after God has blessed us with rain, we should again through the same way thank Him”.

The Water Utilities Corporation has heeded the President’s call. Thus, this past Sunday, they hosted prayers at the Gaborone Dam.

This is in view of the fact that Botswana has been experiencing lack of rain that has resulted in the Ministry declaring Year 2013 a drought year, following a Drought Assessment Tour Exercise.

The exercise confirmed that rainfall was poorly distributed and much below normal in most parts of the country thus government concluded that that the overall food situation in the country has deteriorated and has approved that the whole country be declared drought stricken.

FIGHTING SPIRITUALLY

With Makarov Abotseng

The month of September has been dedicated to pray against HIV and AIDS. The theme for this year is Building Botswana through Commitment to Behaviour Change: Stop AIDS, Keep the Promise. This is just another way to fight this enemy.

His Honour The Vice President, Dr. Ponatshego Kedikilwe at the National AIDS Council meeting of April 2013 said, “Our resolve and effort to realise no new HIV infections should therefore be reflected in our own words, deeds, commitment”.

He added that for zero new infection to become a reality, there is a need to implement a host of tried and tested programmes whose synergistic effect will produce better results, hence the need to invest more on combination of biomedical, behavioural and structural interventions as we draw closer to 2016 and beyond.

Our Ministry has to this end lined up a set of activities specifically for this purpose. This includes Morning Prayers sessions with motivational talks.
On the 6th of September 2013 First Care Elderly Home held an Elderly Wellness and Welfare event in Mahalapye, with Hon. Botlogile Tshireletso officiating.

In his welcome remarks, Kgosi Tsoebebe Segotsi expressed his delight at such an event being organized in honor of the senior citizens in his ward. He also said that he hopes the event would mark the beginning of many other events of that kind. “I hope that young people in other wards would do the same in honoring senior citizens in their respective wards,” noted Kgosi Tsoebebe.

For her part, the Coordinator of First Care Elderly Home, Agnes Lesole said “First Care Elderly Home is the beginning of great things because we aim to build an elderly home in the near future.

Elders will be well protected and properly taken care of in this home.” She further added that elders are reservoirs of our culture and traditions. It is vital that they are properly taken care of because when they die they take all the knowledge they have with them.

For her part, Hon. Tshireletso said “through this event, we are acknowledging the role and significance of our elders in our community. This commendable gesture of reaching out to the senior citizens is blessed by my Ministry, whose biggest mandate is putting people first.”

She also emphasized that it is everyone’s responsibility to ensure that senior citizens are protected, loved and respected to satisfy our Vision 2016 pillar of “A Compassionate, Just and Caring Nation.”
Anonymous is a 40 years old man employed here at MLGRD. He is willing to share his story with the rest of his colleagues on conditions of anonymity as he is still afraid to disclose his status publicly. He hopes that one day he will summon the courage to face all of his colleagues and share his journey with HIV.

How long have you had the virus and how has that particular journey of your life been?

I have been knowingly living with HIV for the past 12 years. How long I had been living with it before the test, I honestly do not know. Needless to say, it has been a rollercoaster ride of emotions and hasn’t been easy at all. I actually almost died as I went to test for the virus late when I had been sick for a long time. I guess when I started getting sick all the time I suspected it might be the virus but was too fearful to face that. As a result I lost a lot of money going through consultations with traditional doctors who all seemed to think I was being bewitched by those close to me.

What made you decide to turn to western medicine then?

I finally decided on western medicine when I was completely broke and had developed a cough that wasn’t getting any better. I remember how absolutely desperate I was for help at that point and the shock I went into when the nurse revealed my results. Initially I went into denial, asking the nurse for a retest which she did not refuse. Of course the results came back the same. To me it felt like someone at that clinic was sabotaging me and was messing around with my results, and so began my other journey of testing in various other clinics until I gave up and it sunk in that I was actually sick. I gave up on life and decided to just wait for death to claim me whenever it wanted which took too long and my mother decided to intervene. She forcefully took me to hospital and had me enrolled on ARV’s immediately.

The first few months of treatment were a horror that I cannot describe. I had serious complications from sweating profoundly to just swelling up everywhere. Eventually I began to look better and looking at me now no one can actually believe the ordeal I went through.

So, what advice do you have for your colleagues who might be scared to test?

I don’t blame them for feeling the fear. But I actually believe that feeling fear is a good thing, it’s a sign that you are alive. The is wrong is letting fear cripple you such that you fail to accept the reality of what is happening to you. I can also advice them not to wait too long when they can see that their health is failing. They may not be as lucky as I was to have missed death by a few seconds.HIV is not a death sentence, there are diseases like cancer which can worry you but with HIV you know you can live a long normal life with it.

Is there anything positive that you can share that happened to you after your diagnosis?

Actually there is quite a lot. After enrolling on treatment and undergoing various counselling sessions I was able to go back normally into society, if only a bit more conscious of taking care of myself. Nkile kabo kele lesutha la bohelo but malatsi a kea itlhokomela that’s why ke lebega bokau jaana.

In 2008 I met and married my wife who is also HIV positive. It was not a conscious decision to go looking for a positive person but I appreciate her because we share common goals in terms of our health and we support each other. We also consciously made a decision not to have children as I did not want to risk my wife’s health in any way. In any case we have children from our previous relationships and that is enough.

We at Batho Pele would like to thank Anonymous for sharing his story with us. We believe that by talking to us he has made the first step towards total revelation. We wish him good health.

SECOND CHANCES

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WHY DO OUR PEOPLE STILL PERISH AT THE HANDS OF HIV/AIDS IN THIS DAY AND AGE WITH ALL THE MEASURES GOVERNMENT HAS PUT IN PLACE?

The messages are all over, people are either ignorant or just believe they are invincible. There are people out there that see the messages everyday but still refuse to believe that they can ever get infected.

The love of money by teenagers is also a cause. Teenagers are in the habit of fast life, wanting things to happen for them instantly. They end up compromising their health just as long as they can have whatever fashion item is trending at that particular time.

A lot of people are killed by denial. They have the results but still refuse to believe that they are true.

Many of us are embarrassed to go to the clinic for treatment. We don’t want to be seen walking out of the caravan designated for treatment. Maybe its high time government also revised that, perhaps if ARV’s taken at the pharmacy like all other medications people wouldn’t have such a problem enrolling on treatment.

WHAT THEY SAID

It is bad enough that people are dying of AIDS but no one should die of ignorance.

ELIZABETH TAYLOR
September is a month dedicated to praying against HIV/AIDS in Botswana. This is a call to all the citizenry to set aside differences while joining hands and crying out to God in one voice for a cure to this disease. Needless to say, there are a host of other maladies that our beautiful country is facing, among them are the alarming rate at which crime seems to be gaining momentum, the skies that seem to be our enemies and won’t let up on the rain. All these are issues which have the potential to drive our country into disdain and disrepute.

As Ministries and the civic society participate in the month, so is Batho Pele with the following activities:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6th September</td>
<td>Pastor Emmy Kgawane Parent Child Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>9th September</td>
<td>Pastor Otukile T. Mampane Parent Child Communication “It’s a family matter”</td>
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<tr>
<td>11th September</td>
<td>Kgalalelo Mabona Promotion of love and support within family: the story of Hannah in the book of Samuel.</td>
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<td>13th September</td>
<td>Assistant Minister, Hon. Olebile Gaborone Prayer for Rain and other social ills affecting the nation</td>
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<td>16th September</td>
<td>Brother Ishmael Young person sharing on “Christian Character”</td>
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<tr>
<td>18th September</td>
<td>Inspector Motlogelwa Crime</td>
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<td>23rd September</td>
<td>Ellen Kgotlheng Walk the Talk</td>
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<td>25th September</td>
<td>T. E. Gabonthonhe Walk the Talk</td>
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<td>27th September</td>
<td>Prophet Mothusi E’Lad group, Franklin, Dineo Molebatsi, Ellen Kgotlheng, Gaone Mogae. Closing September as month of prayer (1 hour 30 mins session at the Kgolla) “Remember its Leiteise day”</td>
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There is no how we can separate the whole person from work and family, as public officers, we need to manage and the balance between work and family to effectively discharge our duties at home and at work. In these tough economic times, the pressures of work and the need to provide for your family can be more intense than ever.

**Steps toward balance with work and family**

- **Write Down Family Goals.** Family needs change over time. Opportunities to build a tree house for the kids or participate in a new family pastime don’t last forever. Decide what is important and write it down. Assign a date, and make these goals “absolutely-will-happens.”
- **Stick to Your Values.** Sometimes it can be tough to make a choice between a family and a work activity. Knowing where you stand on your values can make tough choices easier.
- **Recognize that Imbalance is Sometimes Inevitable.** It is important to recognize that jobs and responsibilities are important and that they sometimes take priority.
- **Revisit Your Schedule.** When your work schedule changes, opportunities may become available to participate in family activities. Claim the high ground!
- **Recognize the Benefits of Balance.** Balancing work and family has pay-offs for children, home relationships, and everyone’s future happiness. Recognizing this can help you keep balance in mind.

If you are diligent and willing to apply yourself to making sure that both your family life and your work life as fruitful as possible you will find your stress levels in both places decreasing a great deal.

Balance between work and home is to keep clear boundaries. If you are able to keep your work stress at work and your home stress at home, you will find that both places are over all much more positive places to be.

To this end I suggest that you not bring extra work home with you or if you absolutely have to bring extra home, allot a particular time frame to do it in and stick with your plan. If your family knows that you will only be doing work till a certain time and then will be able to truly dedicate yourself to them, they will be much more willing to wait.
Being HIV positive was previously a source of shame for a lot of people. Perhaps it’s the way contraction of the disease was erroneously associated with nothing but promiscuity. However these days we are aware that there are many ways of getting this disease and HIV positive people are now living proudly positive. Positive about their lives, about their futures and constantly taking necessary steps to a better outcome.

Living positively means taking steps to a better health and ensures that we live in our optimal health. This includes lifestyle changes such as quitting smoking, alcohol, being more selective about the food we consume and so forth.

Many times we seem to only focus on the physical aspect of health and leave out the spiritual being. However spiritual wellbeing can affect our physical being and as such the necessary steps should be taken to ensure good health. Below are some of the steps to take to ensure we are always positive mentally/spiritually;

**DO NOT LIVE IN FEAR OF WHAT YOU CANNOT CONTROL**

According to author Joyce Meyer, “until the power of fear is broken in our lives we are captive to it, which means we are not free to follow our hearts. Fear brings torment and we must refuse to entertain it or our lives will be miserable”. HIV is not a condition to be feared, infact study has shown that some positive people outlive their negative counterparts, so in essence HIV is not a death sentence.

**POSITIVE THINKING**

Reduce stress by eliminating negative self-talk. Positive thinking helps with stress management and can even improve your health.

Your thoughts play a big role on how you perceive your status and how you will eventually take care of yourself. If your thoughts are negative you will neglect your health and will have to bear the consequences.

Keep your eyes open and your thoughts pure to appreciate the good in life.

Laugh so hard your face hurts.

Seek someone to share with. It helps to deal with the stress when days get dark, someone who will hold your hand through those days. You might actually be surprised by the positive support you get from those who love you.

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The church leadership should stand up and preach against HIV/AIDS in churches. Over 80 percent of Batswana are Christians, why don’t pastors use that percentage to their advantage and change the behaviour of people?

HON. PHANOU SKELEMANI
Customers are essentially the core reason why businesses, whether parastatal, private or government departments exist. We are by and for customers. In a nutshell, were customers to decide not to use our services we would have to pack and close shop.

It is with this notion at the back of our minds that all organizations develop their complaint management systems. How you address a customer is the deciding factor between retaining them or losing them completely. If you address a complaint effectively you retain not just a customer but also gain the desired reputation of good service.

Complaints Management is a process of planning to avoid complaints where possible and organizing to resolve them where they happen, as rapidly and smoothly as possible. It requires skills such as effective communication, problem solving and negotiating with focus on interests. Complaints are not the problem but when they are poorly managed problems occur. Every organization should have a good attitude about complaints.

**HOW TO HANDLE CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS**

- Listen to the customer: customers want to heard and understood.
- Take their complaints seriously: demonstrate that you care about the issue.
- Apologize for the problem [and mean it, people can always tell when an apology is neither sincere nor heartfelt]; whatever you do don’t blame the customer, they bring business and create employment.
- Write down the complaint; write down what they are telling for record keeping. This helps to avoid fumbling when the customer comes back for feedback. It also helps the organization to take stock when they reflect on issues hindering their progress.
- Ask the right question: to get the right answers to enable one to resolve the matter.
- Solve the problem; decide how you are going to solve the problem and communicate clearly with the customer.
- Give assurance– assure that you will fix the problem.
- Thank the customer complaining – they offer priceless information when they tell us we have failed and how we can improve our business.

**References**

www.workpro.com/complaints-management-system

Centre for Continuing Education | Department of Extra-Mural and Public Education

By Onkgopotse Marlitintshi
It’s no secret that HIV compromises the body’s immunity thus making the body susceptible to opportunistic diseases. That obviously means that such people will find themselves at the doctor’s office more than usual to check their CD4 count or do some other check up.

However most people do not seem to be in the know how about government sick leave and how it operates. Below is what the general order has to say about sick leave so you know your stand.

151.1 An officer who is unable to attend to his duties because of illness must take steps to inform the Permanent Secretary by the quickest means possible.

151.2 Absence from duty because of illness for a period more than 48 hours must be supported by a medical certificate which will state the period of sick leave recommended. This period may include any necessary period of recuperation after an illness.

151.3 A medical certificate must be signed by a Government medical officer or by a private practitioner recognised by the permanent secretary responsible for health.

151.4 In any period of three years an Officer may, subject at any time to a decision taken on medical grounds under the provisions of G.O.20, be granted sick leave of:

151.4.1 Up to six months on full pay; followed by

151.4.2 Any vacation leave which the officer has standing to his credit; followed by

151.4.3 Up to six months on half pay
WHAT THEY SAID

PROF. SHEILA TLLOU

We need technical expertise to know what works and doesn’t work in HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. 30 years into the HIV epidemic, we must challenge ourselves to do things differently. Nearly 30 million people have lost their lives to AIDS. Though we are making gains against HIV, we are not doing enough, or enough of the right things, to break the back of the epidemic.

LINAH MOHOHLO

The main drivers of HIV and AIDS has been and still is, stigma and discrimination. It is because of the stigma and discrimination epidemic that many people are afraid to go out and test. Our fear is that if we are found to be HIV positive then we would be stigmatized and looked down upon. It is an account of stigma that persons living with HIV would rather stay at home and not access life saving drugs.

UYAPO NDADI

Let us give publicity to H.I.V./AIDS and not hide it, because the only way to make it appear like a normal illness like TB, like cancer, is always to come out and say somebody has died because of H.I.V./AIDS, and people will stop regarding it as something extraordinary.

NELSON MANDELA

My message to you is very basic: prevention starts with you today, prevention is your responsibility. Prevention is not just a choice prevention is the choice, we have the power to prevent new infections, we have the will to eliminate stigma and discrimination. We can stop AIDS-related death if we direct the course of our destiny.

LT. GEN. IAN KHAMA

It would be remiss of me if I did not make reference to the HIV/AIDS pandemic that has left no institution unscathed. All institutions or employers have no choice but to intensify the fight against HIV/AIDS which is threatening to wipe off a significant number of the people of our country. The banking industry, like all other sectors of the economy, is not spared the wrath of this scourge.