December 1st 2014 marks the 26th annual ‘World AIDS Day’, an International health day that is held each year since 1988.

World AIDS Day is a day of remembrance and support for those who have passed on and people living with HIV/AIDS.

The day seeks to raise awareness on issues pertinent to the prevention of HIV infections and gives opportunity for organisations within both the private domains and the public to collaborate and disseminate information, fight against prejudice and improve knowledge about HIV/AIDS particularly in high prevalence countries such as South Africa.

W.A.D aims to encourage citizens of all nations worldwide to be aware of HIV, to take action to reduce transmission of HIV by promoting safe sex practices and to ensure that people living with HIV can participate fully in the life of the community, free from stigma and discrimination.

The AIDS Foundation of South Africa (AFSA) continues to celebrate the W.A.D under the theme; “Getting to Zero” echoing the UNAIDS vision of achieving “Zero new HIV infections, Zero discrimination, Zero AIDS related deaths.

Zero new infections can be achieved through education, behaviour change, alterations in harmful cultural practices, and empowering women to access HIV prevention and treatment services.

Zero discrimination can be achieved through working with communities to reduce stigma, and mobilise their support for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Zero AIDS related deaths can be achieved through peer support, access to holistic healthcare and outreach activities, which improve adherence and help individuals and their communities realise AIDS is not a death sentence.

On the 25th November 2014, around the country South Africans commemorated to mark the first day of the sixteen days of activism for no violence against women and children. For the 11th year, South Africans take part in the global campaign, which runs from 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) through to International Human Rights Day on 10 December 2014.

While the campaign runs only for 16 days each year, its objectives are reinforced by a year-long 365 days programme to continue generating awareness on the protection of women and children with more focus on mobilizing men and partnering with them to also assist in the fight against this scourge of violence on women and children.
AFSA representatives visited IGAGASI FM (Durban) on the day of commemorating the World AIDS Day 1 December 2014. With the challenging vision by UNAIDS of achieving Zero discrimination, Zero AIDS related deaths and Zero new HIV infections.

The aim of the interview was to share with the public on issues relating to HIV/AIDS and to showcase the Foundation’s effort in Getting to Zero.

Lihle Dlamini, Advocacy Officer for the Foundation said: “AFSA is calling for greater recognition of the importance of emotional and social support for people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

“In line with the UNAIDS vision AFSA strives to contribute to the National Strategic Plan (NSP) 2012 to 2016 driven by long term vision for the country of zero new HIV and TB infection and zero discrimination associated with HIV and TB. As a contribution AFSA is implementing various HIV combination prevention programmes and programmes seeking to address the issue of sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR).”

One of AFSA’S partner organisations Bhekuzulu Self Sufficient Project (BSSP) funded under the Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights programme (SRHR) shared with us their efforts in “Getting to Zero”. With their collaboration between the Department of Health (DOH), the Department of Social Development (DSD), Mpilonhle Project and the community of Bhekuzulu managed to mobilize thousands of residents who came in numbers at the events for HIV Counselling and Testing (HCT), boys and men were also recruited for Medical Male Circumcision (MMC) and also received basic health services.

Before and after the 2013 World AIDS Day, a number of events were planned in the areas of Bhekuzulu. The community which comprised of the youth and elders, the healthy and the sick received basic information from local nurses and were addressed on the advantages of abstinence, the importance of safe sex, proper condom use and facts regarding HIV/AIDS were also brought to attention.

Fezile Hadebe a Project Director of BSSP said “People living with HIV/AIDS now have a huge change in attitude. “They are no longer resigned upon learning about their HIV status, they now can see a future and prepared to live a healthy long lifestyle”

This W.A.D 2014 nearly 200 community members have showed their support for people living with and affected by HIV and marched through Bhekuzulu village to the centre where everyone was treated with inspirational talks about living a positive healthy lifestyle. Hadebe also added to say “this was a great step towards destigmatizing HIV/AIDS and disseminating accurate and useful information about the virus”.

BHEKUZULU SELF SUFFICIENT PROJECT—“ZERO AIDS RELATED DEATHS”

ON AIR: AFSA team gathered on World AIDS Day and visited IGAGASI FM to conduct interviews on HIV/AIDS.

“GETTING TO ZERO”

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Thabang Home Based Care is AFSA’s partner organisation which is supported through the collaboration between AFSA, CHOICE Trust and the AIDS Consortium in the Limpopo province (Capricorn district) funded by the Irish Aid government.

The organisation’s shared with us their effort in getting to zero since UNAIDS first introduced its vision in fighting HIV/AIDS epidemic in 2011.

According to Patric Mothiba, a Project Manager for the organisation, said “our effort in Getting to Zero have contributed a lot to the community with the implementation of programmes to ensure that the community is aware of HIV&AIDS prevention methods, gender based violence prevention technics which all is also inclusive of care and support programmes i.e. taking care of the sick and enforcing treatment adherence.

Since 2012 the organisation have managed to conduct awareness campaigns, dialogues around Ga-Mothiba community covering 7 villages, 4 schools and pre-schools preaching the gospel of combination prevention to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS, TB and other epidemics (PMTCT, HCT, SGBV, MMC).

With door to door visits and events held in the past recent years to date, the organisation was able to distribute useful information and distributing 72 000+ condoms reaching a total number of 10 000 house holds and 20 000 individuals.

The organisation also managed to partner with other departments in making sure that there is none discrimination amongst community members no HIV related deaths and new HIV infections. Patric said “the partnership of the collaboration between AFSA, CHOICE Trust and The AIDS CONSORTIUM and other departments has assisted the organisation to implement HIV&AIDS Awareness Programmes through dialogues and educational initiatives targeting various community structures e.g. schools, traditional leaders, woman societies and churches”.

ETHEKWINI DISTRICT LOWERS MOTHER TO CHILD TRANSMISSION

The eThekwini District has reduced the rate mother-to-child transmission of HIV from 28% to 9%. These are positive news revealed by Mayor, Cllr James Nxumalo at the recent annual World Aids Day commemoration held in Umgababa, South of Durban 1 December 2014.

“This is good news for the people of eThekwini (kzn) as it showing improvement in infection in a District that is currently known as leading in the number of people living with HIV/AIDS and TB. I wish to thank and encourage all role players who made this possible, as this shows that we can make it possible that by 2016 the City has zero new infections from HIV/AIDS and TB.”

On the 1st of December we commemorate World Aids Day and today I want to encourage all to test for HIV and know their status. This day also reminds us that we need to increase our knowledge on issues faced by people living with HIV/AIDS and forge more tolerance as a community. It is also an opportunity to make people aware of other social issues that our communities face daily.”

Mayor Nxumalo said, “people should take the HIV/AIDS statistics seriously since everyone is either infected or affected by the disease. It saddens me to learn that KwaZulu- Natal has the highest number of people living with HIV and AIDS in the country. I urge all residents to commit themselves to changing these figures and work together to fight HIV and AIDS. We must act on President Jacob Zuma’s call that was made in February this during his State of the Nation Address which committed government to have tested 15 million people by 2015.”

As part of addressing the social ills faced by the community, the Mayor also distributed wheelchairs, walking sticks and spectacles to those who are in need.

As chair of the eThekwini AIDS Council the Mayor pledged more effective and efficient coordination of the structures of the Municipality, Provincial government and civil society to realise our goal of zero new infections in the interim and an HIV free generation in the long term.
Our Purpose Statement

The AIDS Foundation of South Africa (AFSA) is a developmental organisation that exists to mitigate the impacts of HIV and AIDS and poverty through the implementation of health and community development projects in vulnerable communities.

Our Vision

To be a leading contributor to the reversal of the burden of disease from HIV and TB and the reduction of poverty in South Africa.