

Global Strategies for HIV Prevention



One Person in a World of Need

December, 2005



From Left: Gary Haugen, Mark Labberton (right), Cori Stern, Sandy Davis (right)

I am awed with the great impact one individual can have as he or she seeks to follow the teachings of Jesus. Each person seems to be part of a great mosaic put together piece by piece as part of God's master plan.

In our work with those who suffer from HIV we see glimpses of how God works through **one person**.

Gary Haugen, president of the International Justice Mission, was invited to give a Veritas Forum lecture on justice at UC Berkeley and at First Presbyterian Church Berkeley. He was interested in what was happening with HIV prevention in resource-poor countries and asked me to give an update. We met in a Telegraph Avenue coffee shop, where I explained that in spite of dramatic advances in our country, more than 800,000 infants continued to be born with HIV infection each year in resource-poor countries. The cost of drugs to save the life of each infant amounted to only a few dollars. For Gary, it became an issue of injustice. During his lectures, he used what we had spoken about as an example of the injustice that afflicts resource-poor countries. His words reached another's heart.

The next person

Hearing Gary Haugen speak, Mark Labberton, senior pastor at First Presbyterian Church Berkeley, was also moved by the injustice. Soon, he was writing a letter to the leaders of Presbyterian churches throughout the U.S. to encourage people to give to "Save a Life," a fund that we had established to purchase life-saving drugs for HIV prevention. Over the next two years, we received donations of more than \$160,000. Those funds were the start of a program that has allowed us to provide drugs to more than 82,500 HIV-infected pregnant women in 103 programs in 24 countries.

And the next person

Cori Stern called me within hours after landing at the Los Angeles International Airport. She had just returned from the Jos, Nigeria and Faith Alive Clinic where Dr. Isichei was

caring for HIV-infected men, women and children. She had heard that something could be done to prevent HIV from infecting babies born to infected mothers. When she went to the Internet she found out about us and our Save a Life program. Soon we were conducting a workshop to train more than 50 birth attendants to conduct voluntary HIV counseling and testing, and to administer the drug nevirapine to HIV-infected pregnant women in their villages. Twelve volunteers accompanied us to Jos to assist in the workshop and to provide resources enabling the birth attendants to reach out into rural villages with follow-up training.

And the next person

Sandy Davis, one of the individuals that accompanied us to the Faith Alive workshop, took the lead in conveying the desperate needs of those in the HIV-infected community to Bayside Church in Granite Bay, California. Individuals responded with donations to maintain the momentum of the Save a Life program. Their compassion was extraordinary and their generosity enormous providing more than \$104,000 in just one Sunday for our Save a Life program.

Within months, a team of committed individuals from Bayside Church returned to Faith Alive, not only to provide immediate assistance, but also to draft plans for a new clinic and hospital, and to further define the needs of the widows, orphans and those who were HIV-infected. Their return was significant for Dr. Isichei stated that many people had come to see his clinic but none returned until now. His hope and faith were strengthened.

Three more visits followed in less than a year with almost \$1 million committed to building a new hospital and clinic and developing an HIV training center. So far, 39 individuals have contributed their time, money and professional skills to making these trips to help countless Nigerians suffering from the affects of HIV.

A growing network of love

Each of these individuals contributes to God's plan, creating a wonderful mosaic of His faithfulness. His love touched the heart of one, who moved into action and touched many, who continue to move into action and

touch many more. And through each of them, His network of love continues to grow and flourish in the face of this devastating epidemic.

Today, there are many new workers at Faith Alive who are trained and helping those with HIV. Training has expanded out to other rural areas in Nigeria. And last January, healthcare workers from Faith Alive helped teach HIV prevention at a Liberian refugee camp. We are now using the model of partnering U.S. churches with faith-based hospitals and clinics to meet the needs in other resource-poor regions in Kananga and Goma, Congo, and the Dominican Republic.

Whoever thinks his or her efforts cannot make a difference has only to look at these few examples we have been privileged to witness as we work with those who recognize the spiritual and physical needs of those who suffer in the HIV epidemic. Through their example and leadership, God is using them to carry His message of hope.

Isaiah 1:17

Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.

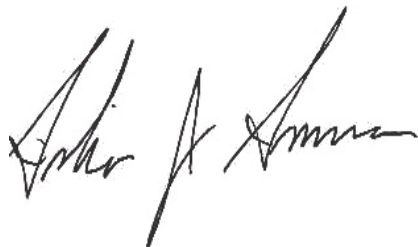
In the coming year, we will reach out to those in the Congo, a country long neglected by international organizations, but a country with many strong, committed Christians in constant prayer that others will respond to their needs. We will be working with Heal Africa in Goma, Congo. That city was devastated by rebels and a volcanic eruption and is now valiantly working to raise itself, literally, from the ashes. In spite of the immense poverty, we see Christians of all denominations working together to overcome past calamities, especially the intrusion of HIV into families and communities.

As we move forward, our needs are specific. We need financial resources to:

- Continue training healthcare workers in HIV clinics and for home-based care in Nigeria, Liberia, Congo, and among the Haitians who live in poverty within the Bateyes of the Dominican Republic;
- Distribute drugs to treat HIV-infected pregnant women, healthcare workers and women who suffer from vesicovaginal fistulas resulting from rape and the added burden of HIV; and
- Provide for some of the basic needs of orphans and vulnerable children who have lost so much to this horrible epidemic.

Anything you can contribute will be wisely used to deliver help and hope to those who are in desperate need of both.

Thank you for your generosity.



Arthur J. Ammann MD
Global Strategies for HIV Prevention, President