

GUARDIANS OF HOPE Special Report - Fall 2009

"Hope and solidarity among those most impacted by HIV and AIDS"

Five years ago CBM launched the *Guardians of Hope* program to support our church partners in the battle against AIDS.

Today we rejoice that lives that have been saved, people living with AIDS feel accepted in churches, and thousands of AIDS orphans are receiving care. We are grateful beyond measure both to generous supporters in Canada and to those who serve on the front lines in Africa and India for their response to the AIDS pandemic. We know that many people pray for the AIDS crisis and the victims of AIDS. There are also Canadians who give sacrificially in the faith that God is always present where life circumstances are at the worst.

Over the past several months we formally reviewed *Guardians of Hope* programs in Kenya, Rwanda, Angola and India. The following report offers a summary of *Guardians of Hope* ministries in four countries. We hope that you find the information to be encouraging and inspiring.

Kenya – Africa Brotherhood Church (ABC)

With 16 groups and 1,000 members, the *Guardians of Hope* projects of the ABC are making great strides in HIV and AIDS education, prevention, and providing care to those living with AIDS.

Jasmine Jonathan visits with a 15 year old AIDS orphan who is HIV+. He runs a small bicycle shop to support himself and his grandmother.



Together, they have:

- Trained thousands of people in AIDS awareness, thereby reducing the social stigma, shame, and fear of people who have AIDS and cared for people with AIDS and their families through the self-help groups
- Helped AIDS patients obtain medical treatment through government programs by providing referrals and transportation
- Provided training in savings, loans, start-up grants, livestock donations and business skills to help increase family income
- Provided more than 500 children and youth with school fees, uniforms and emotional support

Kenya – African Christian Churches and Schools (ACC&S)

With 9 *Guardians of Hope* groups, the ACC&S projects are making positive progress in many areas:

- Training has been given to group leaders and members to meet the psycho-social and spiritual needs of people living with AIDS and their families
- AIDS prevention education and training was given to over 1,500 youth and adults in the past year
- Over 200 households benefitted from provision of livestock and seeds to address nutritional needs. Most homes now have small kitchen gardens, thereby improving nutrition levels and raising health and income levels
- Hundreds of children have been assisted with food, uniforms and school fees so they can stay in school.

India

AIDS in India has presented a major global threat. It has been difficult to accurately assess the growth of AIDS infections and to openly speak about risk factors. Indian men are often forced to seek work outside of their home areas. Wives are frequently innocent victims of their husband's relations with prostitutes.

A *Guardians of Hope* program in India was started by The Sharing Way in 2008. A recent visitor to India informed us of the powerful testimony of Jasmine Jonathan, The Sharing Way's Program Coordinator. Jasmine makes a deliberate effort to publicly embrace women living with AIDS and spend time with them as a witness to God's unconditional love.

Angola

The Angola *Guardians of Hope* program has been slower to take shape, due in part to the lower incidence of AIDS in the country.

- The *Guardians of Hope* group in Luanda has trained almost 300 people in AIDS prevention and care. The group offers support to people living with AIDS through fellowship, medical counsel and microcredit training.
- The Soyo *Guardians of Hope* group reaches out to approximately 60 people living with AIDS. The emphasis is on nutrition – a key factor in maintaining health and benefitting from anti-retroviral drugs. They do extensive AIDS prevention education among Angolan youth.



▲
▲
Coordinator Patty Card with a *Guardians of Hope* group in Angola.

Mark the date. December 1 is World AIDS Day. Plan a special event to raise funds and awareness about this pandemic.

Email communications@cbmin.org to order your free promotional bulletin inserts and posters.

Rwanda

There are 44 AIDS committees directly linked to churches within nine project areas. These committees directly assist more than 2,000 households.

Some of the highlights include:

- The program has provided church-based care and educational support for 313 AIDS orphans and 242 HIV+ children
- Microcredit groups have enabled 1,180 families to access small business loans in 2008.
- 1,134 people benefitted from training in raising livestock and gardening. Over 5,000 rabbits distributed to needy households helped improve their nutrition and income
- Volunteers staff a home-based care program for people with AIDS who are unable to attend weekly meetings. These volunteers work to enhance the health and well-being of the entire family and to provide comfort for the person living with AIDS.
- Numerous testimonies from committee members about the transformation of people from despair to hope through the love of Christ and the fellowship of the *Guardians of Hope* group

Challenges for *Guardians of Hope*

There are many challenges in the battle against AIDS. Some of these are medical. There are promising new drugs that are being tested. Other problems are social. People with AIDS continue to face stigmas and social isolation. There continue to be challenges for AIDS prevention education. It is difficult to talk about AIDS without addressing areas that seem private.

It is unacceptable that there are still young women and men who believe that AIDS is transmitted by mosquitoes or may be caused by walking without shoes. There are ethical issues that require frankness and boldness. In particular, the predatory behaviors of men continue to be a major factor in the spread of AIDS.

There is also a financial challenge to AIDS. Each year The Sharing Way budgets around \$400,000 for the Guardians of Hope program. This year we need to raise \$250,000 in the last three months of the year. An anonymous donor has promised \$50,000 if we are able to raise matching funds. Our prayer is that there will be 10 people who can contribute \$1,000 or 20 people who can contribute \$500 so that we can meet this goal. If God is moving you to support *Guardians of Hope* in any amount, thank you on behalf of all the people who benefit through this program.

For more information about the Guardians of Hope program, email thesharingway@cbmin.org or visit www.cbmin.org.



Canadian Baptist Ministries
7185 Millcreek Drive
Mississauga ON L5N 5R4

Tel: 905.821.3533
Fax: 905.826.3441
www.cbmin.org