

The event was a collaboration among the Siphocosini Clinic, the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF), and the Siphocosini KaGogo Center, and was also supported by donations from the US Embassy, NERCHA, World Food Programme (WFP), World Vision, Spar Supermarket, Pick n' Pay, and the presence of various organizations, including the Swaziland National AIDS Program, PSI, ICAP, the Family Life Association of Swaziland (FLAS), and Lusweti. The day was a wonderful success, despite the fact that, on the evening before, we were unsure whether our months of hard work organizing would pay off. While Bomake (women from the community) and I camped out at our community clinic preparing the last-minute details, erecting the tents, making AIDS ribbons and food tickets, and preparing food for the large number of attendees we'd projected, the sky opened up in a massive thunderstorm that threatened to stymie our efforts. Throughout the night, the rain stopped and started – what would we do if rain kept people away? We had no contingency plan, which seemed pretty shortsighted. However, luck shined on us, even if the sun didn't, and December 1 arrived, slightly overcast and misty, but rain-free.

The event began early with an AIDS Walk, led by the drum majorettes from Siphocosini High School and Bhekephi Primary School. The 2.5-kilometer walk began at one end of the community and ended at the grounds of the clinic, where the main event took place. As the walkers arrived, they were greeted by NERCHA banners displaying the World AIDS Day 2012 theme: “Getting to Zero: Zero New HIV Infections. Zero Discrimination. Zero AIDS-Related Deaths.” The celebration began with a performance by the drum majorettes followed by a welcome by the MC, Siphos, a senior nurse from the clinic. The event focused on addressing the importance of male involvement in the fight against HIV, and more specifically the male role in the prevention of mother-to-child transmission. To that end, EGPAF hosted the Swaziland army's drama group, Simomondiya, who performed a play addressing the necessity of male participation in a way that was both substantive and humorous and that had the audience, which contained people of all ages and genders, engaged and entertained. The performance was followed by breakout sessions, facilitated by professionals from EGPAF, to discuss the performance and issues, information and myths surrounding HIV and AIDS.

In addition to the residents of Siphocosini, we were joined by members of neighboring communities. We also were honored to welcome the American Ambassador to Swaziland, Makila James, who gave an inspiring speech. Throughout the day, PSI administered HIV tests at mobile testing units, while the crowd was entertained and inspired by musical, dance and poetry performances by local artists, community members and high school students; and speeches by the Hhohho Regional Health Administrator and members of the Umphakatsi, the community's traditional leadership. After being fed a delicious meal at the end of the day courtesy of food donations by WFP, Spar, Pick n' Pay, and EGPAF – and, of course, the efforts of Bomake – we wrapped up by distributing T-shirts, caps and Tom's shoes that had been donated by World Vision.

According to the World Health Organization, World AIDS Day exists to provide an opportunity for public and private partners to spread awareness about the status of the pandemic and encourage progress in HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment and care in high prevalence countries and around the globe. With the highest HIV prevalence in the world, Swaziland benefits greatly from World AIDS Day as a tool in the battle against this epidemic, which is threatening the very existence of the Swazi people.