

# ISIPHO HIV/AIDS PROJECT



**How wonderful is it that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world!**

~Anne Frank~

Isipho meaning "Gift" in Xhosa (pronounced closa) is the name of a community project that was established in 2002 by a support group of HIV/AIDS infected people in the rural community of Paterson South Africa. Two of the original four from the support group have since passed away, but through sheer determination and love, the remaining two, with the help of other caring people, have created a safe house and support network for people living with HIV/AIDS, orphans and vulnerable children.

Through a series of unplanned events, chance meetings and a casual conversation, we came together. Our lives will never be the same, and this is how the SHADY TREE FOUNDATION was started. Together we will provide a place where an entire town can come together to seek knowledge, manage the disease of HIV/AIDS, mobilize care, feed those unable to get food, provide a creche (preschool) for families needing assistance with their children during the day, protect vulnerable children and their rights, and empower an entire town.

These are the faces of these incredible volunteers, the children, and the people of the Isipho HIV/AIDS project.



**The faces of Isipho**



**The only drinking water is this spout on the side of the building**



**They play in a vacant lot behind the buildings. There are no trees for shade, and the municipal equipment storage borders their play area which means large machinery and trucks are pulling in and out of the property right next to where they play.**





**Currently eight orphaned/vulnerable children live in the safe house. They have either lost their parents to HIV/AIDS, been abandoned, or have been removed from their home due to abuse or lack of a family member to care for them. As of this moment, there are at least an additional 15 who need immediate help.**



**The kitchen where 80 meals are prepared daily**



**Despite the magnitude of needs these children have, the simple acts of hugging and playing with them can be more powerful than anything else.**



**They have two make-shift rooms they use for classes and play. There are limited areas for shelter from the sun. The kitchen is in a separate building that is way too small to handle the large scale needs of basic meal preparation. Our goal is to change all of that, and provide them with the facilities, and the resources to sustain a community based organization.**



**These are some of the people that keep the Ispho HIV/AIDS project running on a day to day basis. Some are paid very little, some nothing at all, but all share the same goal to assist those who are vulnerable and in need. This is what the Ispho HIV/AIDS organization and the Shady Tree Foundation are all about.**



**They are about to lose their current facilities which would place the entire project at risk of being able to serve & care for the numerous vulnerable adults & children within the community. Many would be left with no alternative source for food, shelter, or health support services that Isipho is currently providing for those in need.**



**Shady Tree Foundation, along with an amazing group of local residents who help keep Isipho alive on a daily basis, are committed to ensuring that this doesn't happen! A large parcel next to Isipho's current location has been secured for purchase, and plans are underway to build a proper facility to service those in need.**





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The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and its resultant Auto-Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) are decimating the disadvantaged communities of South Africa. Statistics vary, and depending upon whose perspective you believe, it is estimated that approximately 20% of the population is infected. In the rural areas it is believed that the number may be as high as 35%. Paterson South Africa, where this project is located falls into the rural category. According to the Starfish Foundation, by 2010 as many as 7 million people will likely die of AIDS in Africa, and there will be approximately 1.7 million orphans as a result of that statistic.

Paterson is a rural town about 100 km from Port Elizabeth near the Addo Elephant Park, Shamwari Private Game Reserve and the Amakhala Game Reserves. There is no major economic activity in the town, and it has experienced a steady decline since the early 1980's as its agricultural economy has regressed. The tourism industry in the outlying areas is doing well, but the unemployment rate for the approximate 8,000 residents is estimated to be at 80%. Luckily, individuals from the surrounding businesses have helped to provide funding and volunteer support to the Isipho HIV/AIDS Project. Unfortunately, this isn't enough, and they are in desperate need of continued assistance.

The Shady Tree Foundation was started during a month long vacation in South Africa. We found ourselves constantly faced with the dilemma of how to make a difference in the people's lives. Every day we saw children rummaging through garbage cans, heard of the pandemic spread of HIV/AIDS, and witnessed the unimaginable conditions people were forced to live in everywhere. Then a chance conversation, and an unplanned detour to visit a local charity near the game lodge we were staying in, brought us and the people of Isipho together. Three hours into that meeting we formed the Shady Tree Foundation. Our lives were changed forever. We knew it was our responsibility to help people help themselves and this was the perfect place to start. Our goal is to change the way people look at charity. To be a part of the change, to participate in the process, and to help rebuild lives.

Thank you for your support,

Ryan & Laura Rothschild