

Written by volunteer Jean Eaton

Visiting Nosi

Nosi was a valued carer, she was one of the first carers at Emmanuel. She worked very hard and in addition she translated for Terry Myburg from the Do Ubuntu Orphan Bracelet Campaign when she talked to Xhosa women suffering from HIV/Aids about how the campaign could help them to help themselves: highlighting the way agencies can work successfully together for the good of the community.



Nosi Translating for Terry

Nosi became ill; she was living in a shack in Kwanoxolo and was on the list for a 'smartie house' in Booyens Park, about 25 min drive away. This was a new housing development, the houses were not ready, there were no proper roads, buses, telephones, clinic, shops in fact it was just another shack area. *The 'officials' decided that Nosi must move to a shack near to where her new house would be so she would be ready to move in at a moments notice, despite protests they pulled down her shack and moved her lock, stock and barrel away from her friends, family and church to this God forsaken place.

The carers were very worried about her, she had been ill for 6 months and wouldn't go to the hospital; they wanted to see her but had no transport. Polly said she would arrange transport and we would all go ('all' meaning 35 people from the centre) The carers wanted to buy her flowers but Aunt Grace (another carer and the eldest so her opinion was valued) put her sensible hat on and asked 'why are we buying flowers when she is starving and cold? She knew that Nosi had no money for food or spirit for the primus stove she cooked on. Grace organised a 'whip round' out of their R500 (£ 40) per month pay and bought rice, maize meal, tea, sugar, spirit and 1 orange. I was asked to go to see if I could help. I knew she was bed ridden so I decided to take a glide sheet, which I had brought from the UK, to help with moving and handling in bed

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and an old wheel chair that was without arms but would do the trick. I also took 'rubbing stuff' a toothbrush, toothpaste, soap and flannel and the precious Paracetamol.

The morning arrived and I went out with the carers as usual, we walked miles, the sun was high in the sky and so hot, my feet ached but what made me so happy was that because we all wore the blue polo shirts with the Emmanuel LOGO we were easily identified in the community. People stopped and asked us who we were, what we stood for, and some then asked for help or advice and where could they find us. Ebraim was due to pick us up in his bakkie at a specific place to take us to see Nosi but somehow we got our wires crossed and we ended up walking another mile or so (it felt like a marathon) Eventually we managed to meet up. The bakkie was full but we were unceremoniously hauled into the back to much laughter at my undignified attempts!

It was a good 1/2 hour drive over very rough terrain, the rest of the carers had gone in a mini bus. Polly had gone ahead with Terry and her dog. As we approached the shack area my heart sank, it was truly terrible, wild dogs scavenging for food stared menacingly at us, goats and pigs jostled in the wasteland and then there was Nosi's shack:



Emmanuel carers sitting outside Nosi's shack

the smart car and mini bus looked as if they belonged on another planet. It was suddenly very quiet; we walked to the shack, some people were queuing outside waiting to go in. Polly, Terry and me, as 'important guests', were taken to Nosi's bedside. I felt like an intruder, but she had such a sweet smile and beckoned me to sit next to her on the ramshackle bed. I talked to her for a while then the Pastors wife took over. The tiny room was packed, the carers sat on the bed, the floor, the benches, others stood leaning against the wall. There was no air, no light, we were packed like sardines. Diane the pastors wife started off with prayers ,she read from the bible then started to sing, everyone joined in, she encouraged us to sing louder and louder so the 'Lord' would know we were asking for his help. Then came the ululating, swaying, eyes closed, loud prayers but all I could think of was what a perfect place to contract TB! I desperately wanted to get out but didn't want to offend anyone and then miraculously Polly said she was going to faint with the heat, it was 38 degrees outside so who knows what the temperature was inside. I offered to take her out and we sat outside with Terry and decided what we could do. I was sure she had HIV/AIDS and TB but she needed a proper medical assessment. She had to go to hospital but how did we get her there? Eventually Ebraim agreed to take her in the bakkie, Aunt Grace would go with her to Dora Nginza a huge sprawling

hospital with an appalling reputation, she would stay with her and look after her. The carers packed her few possessions and Ebraim lifted her in his arms and laid her in the back of the truck on some makeshift cushions. Aunt Grace climbed in the back with Nosi: my abiding memory is of Aunt Grace putting up her umbrella to shield Nosi from the blazing sun.

The end of the story? Nosi was diagnosed as end stage Aids and TB and sent home to die. The carers took it in turns to stay with her and nurse her as best they could. Terry emailed me 2 weeks after I had gone home to say she had passed away.

In Terry's words "Poor little kid, she was the best"



* I was told that the shacks are pulled down because:-

- Some people refuse to move, but if their home is pulled down they are forced to.
- To stop people selling or renting out their shacks while living in the new ' smartie ' house
- To prevent squatters/ refugees moving in

There are rumours that the people like living in the shacks, I was told categorically that they actually are desperate to enjoy a nice clean home with electricity, running water and sewage system **but** they want the house to be in the area where they live **now**, where their friends and families are not moved to another area.

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