

Living with Science

CD 1 English Script

Song 1 intro...

Knock knock

MaThemba: Yes, who is that?

Thandi: Hello Ma, it is me Thandi from the Africa Centre (AC).

MaThemba: Yes, How can I help you?

Thandi: Ma, can I ask you some questions for the AC household surveillance?

MaThemba: Yes, come in, but you must know that I only do this because I want to be polite because I do not really understand why you are here.

Thandi: I am sorry Ma. Let me explain a little about AC and how its work helps the community. AC has been working in Umkhaynekude for over ten years now. It is a part of the University of KwaZulu Natal. It does not make any money from its work. Since 2000, it has been collecting information from all the households in the region. This information helps the AC to understand the community better and we share this information with the South African national and provincial government so that they can bring better services to the area.

MaThemba: Why do the AC field workers ask the same questions every year?

Thandi: They are looking at how changes in the community affect health.

MaThemba: And why do they ask about how a person died?

Thandi: We ask about this because we are trying to determine the cause of death. This information tells us about the health of the community.

MaThemba: And sexual practices?

Thandi: We ask about this because we are trying to understand more about HIV and how it is transmitted.

MaThemba: And, is HIV quite high in this region?

B: Yes, HIV is very high. About 5 out of 10 of women between 25-29 years and 4 out of 10 of men between 30-34 years are positive

MaThemba: Wow, I can see by those numbers that the youth are really risk! They must be careful because the youth are our future!

Thandi: Yes, this is true, but older people also need to be careful. We have found that about one in 10 people over 50 years old have the virus.

MaThemba: Sure, but how can we fight this virus?

Thandi: There is actually a lot that you can do to protect yourself from HIV and if you are positive. It is important that all people use a condom at all times it is also good that you know your HIV status. If you discover that you have HIV then you can receive help and medicines for free at your local clinic.

MaThemba: So, life is not over after HIV?

Thandi: Yes, there is a future! You can return to work, you can have strength. You can provide for your family. Furthermore, you can still have children.

MaThemba: How do you share this news with our community?

Thandi: One of the ways is through the road shows. Why don't you come to the show in KwaMsane this Sunday? There will be a live *maskanda*.

MaThemba: That sounds good! I like maskanda. I will go on my way back from church.

Thandi: Good Ma. I am glad that I could help. Goodbye.

MaThemba: Good bye Thandi. Thanks for your help. ... Mmm, I am looking forward to Sunday. I did not know that there was life after HIV. Did you?

Song 2 and Song 3:

Beep beep

Usicabha: Are you going to town?

MaThemba, MaSindi and Xoli: Yes!

MaThemba: Good morning MaSindi how are you?

MaSindi: I am fine. Do you remember my daughter, Xoli? She has finished her nursing training and is working for the AC clinic.

MaThemba: Hi **Xoli**. That is good news! I have learnt that AC is helping to fight HIV in our community. Today I am going to a roadshow to learn more about it.

Xoli: Yes they are, but did you know that the AC is not only interested in HIV? It works with the DOH to treat many sicknesses such as High Blood Pressure and TB, supports the Home based care teams and provides the clinics with park homes, equipment and staff. . The AC has also worked with mothers and infants for many years, helping with early nutrition and getting children off to a good start in life.

Song 4

MaThemba: So, how does the AC help the children of this community?

Xoli: AC advises parents to ensure that children have *all* immunizations. These are free at the clinics. If children do not get all their vaccinations then they are at great risk of catching serious diseases.

MaThemba: And what about HIV+ children? Do they care for them too?

Xoli: Yes, they are also trying to prevent HIV transmission between a mother and child. It is very important for a woman to go to the clinic as soon as she thinks she is pregnant so that she can be tested for HIV and be cared for during pregnancy. If she is positive then she will be given medicine to prevent her from passing the virus onto her unborn child. Once a child is born it is given an HIV test with its first immunization if it is positive then it can start treatment immediately. Mothers are also taught about breastfeeding at the clinics.

MaThemba: But I thought that women with HIV should not breastfeed children...

Xoli: No, that is not true. Exclusive breastfeeding (EB) is the best way to feed children for the first six months of life. Breast milk protects children from diseases such as pneumonia and diarrhoea; it helps to prevent malnutrition & is good for child development. Mixed feeding should be avoided at all costs for HIV-positive women because this can increase the risk of HIV transmission.

MaThemba: Mmm, I did not know that exclusive breastfeeding was so good did you?

Song 5

Female taxi passenger: Excuse me nurse. Can I ask you a question?

Xoli: Yes, what is it?

Female taxi passenger: I hear my neighbour coughing all the time. I think that she has HIV can I let my children play there? I do not want them to catch that virus.

Xoli: Of course your children can play there. You must not be worried about catching HIV like that because the only way to catch it is through unprotected sex, dirty needles or from mother to child. What people with HIV need is love, friendship and support and not to be judged by others. I think that rather than isolating your family from this woman you should try to help her.

Female taxi passenger: Do you think that she has TB?

Xoli: Well, I cannot tell without doing a test, but if a person has been coughing then there is a chance that they have TB and they must be tested. If she has TB, then all her family must be tested because it is easy for it to spread between family members. She must not worry though, because the treatment for TB is very good and these pills can be taken together with ARV pills.

Female taxi passenger: Oh so she might have HIV then?

Xoli: Well, many people who have TB also have HIV so if you test positive for HIV then you must test for TB and vis versa. But not all HIV positive people have TB, in fact a person can feel and look healthy for many years and still have HIV. There is no way that you can tell from the outside. That is why we must all test.

Song 6

Male taxi passenger: But nurse, is it not true that HIV only affects the youth because they do not behave themselves.

Xoli: No Baba, HIV affects us all. The virus can be caught by anybody. It is not dependent on age, race or class. We must all be tested on regular basis to protect ourselves and our families from the virus.

MaSindi: Hey Mathemba isn't this your stop?

MaThemba: Yes MaSindi, thank you, I almost forgot to get off! Yay! I am so excited to hear the maskanda and to learn more about ARVs. I did not know that ARVs can keep you healthy for many years. Did you?

Song 7

MaThemba: I wonder if I can speak to that man standing next to the AC tent about ARVs.

MaThemba: Hello, can you please help me? I have come here to learn more about HIV and ARVs.

Sipho: Yes Ma. I can help you. My name is Sipho. I am a counsellor for the AC voluntary HIV testing. I speak to the people before and after they do their test to help them with the process and to assist them with the results. I have firsthand experience in this field because I have HIV myself and know what it is like to live with this virus.

MaThemba: Sure, and you look strong. I would not have said that you have HIV!

Sipho: Yes, one cannot tell from the outside if a person has HIV. You have to do a test. I am also strong because I am on ARVs. These pills have slowed down the growth of HIV and now my body is strong to fight diseases like TB, pneumonia and diarrhoea.

MaThemba: But do these ARVS not make you feel sick?

Sipho: Well, not everyone feels sick when they take ARVs but I did have some side effects in the first 3 months but then they went away. I told the nurse at the clinic how I was feeling and she gave me some medicines to help. But, even when I felt sick, I never missed a pill because I knew that if I did the ARVs might stop working. I learnt at the clinic that you can never miss a pill and you must take your pill at the same time every day. I use my cell phone to remind me.

MaThemba: But, why do some HIV positive people get ARVs and others not?

Sipho: ARVS are only given to people when their CD4 count is at the correct level or when they are very sick.

MaThemba: CD4 count?

Sipho: The CD4 count is a blood test that tells us how strong or weak the immune system is and whether a person needs ARVs. If your CD4 count is high, than you might not be ready to take the ARV drugs yet, but it is important to keep in contact with the clinic by coming back every 6 months for a checkup so that you can receive the drugs at the right time. ARVs are given when the CD4 shows the immune system is very weak

MaThemba: So these ARVs are really good?

Sipho: Yes, they are! ARVs make you feel strong again and extend your life. Did you know that for every 20 people in our community, 1 of them is taking ARVs. These medicines are helping our people to go back to work, to look after their families and to have children. But first, it is important for people to know their status, only then can we help them.

MaThemba: So how does one get tested?

Sipho: You can go to your clinic, have a test at the home or get tested at a mobile clinic. I had my test at the clinic. When I found out that I was positive I decided to speak to others about it so that I could help others and reduce stigma. I find, working as a counsellor that more and more people want to know their status because they have heard that HIV is not the end. Often friends and couples test together. It is good for couples to do this because if your partner is positive it does not mean that you are also positive so it's important for both of you to test.

MaThemba: Sure this is good news! I now feel much more confident about this virus. I can see that there is hope. HIV is not the end. I can't wait to talk to my husband about this! In fact, I think that I will bring him to the next road show so that we can get tested together!

Sipho: Yes, a lot of men are coming these days. It is good because by learning about HIV, a man can help to protect his family from the virus.

MaThemba: Thanks for your time Sipho, I think that I will go now and enjoy some more music before I leave. I now understand much more about the AC and the good work that they do in our community.

Sipho: Bye, have a good day.

MaThemba: Bye

Song 8 and 9