

**THE ROLE OF CHURCHES IN RESPONSE TO HIV AND AIDS  
EPIDEMIC IN VHEMBE DISTRICT OF SOUTH AFRICA**

By

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### ABSTRACT

The number of AIDS cases and associated deaths continues to rise in the developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. The provision of effective community/home-based intervention has become not only a priority but an absolute necessity. This situation has stretched hospitals beyond their limits and has shifted the burden of care to families and communities. It has long been recognized that churches play a pivotal role in relation to the HIV and AIDS epidemic. Attention to their contribution has increased in recent years as religious groups have come to be seen as key actors in many aspects of AIDS. However, there is a gap between the contributions of churches and those of primary health care organizations, as they seem to operate in silos.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of churches in response to the HIV and AIDS epidemic, to determine the link between the church and primary health care services in the community, and to provide recommendations to churches and pastors on how they can collaboratively play an active role in contributing to community-based interventions of HIV and AIDS.