



The Adventist Woman

The Journal of the Association of Adventist Women



Helen Hall, a 2005 AAW Woman of the Year and an Australian educator involved in establishing schools for Karen refugees in Thailand, has received one of her nation's top honors for public service. Hall, a Seventh-day Adventist working in northwestern Thailand, was named a recipient of the Medal of the Order of Australia, the Australian government announced on January 26. She is believed to be the first Adventist to receive the medal.

Hall, founder and principal of Eden Valley Academy, is being recognized "for service to international relations, particularly in the establishment of educational facilities in Thailand," according to an Australian government announcement. Since 1975, more than 14,000 Australians have been recognized for their service to Australia or to humanity.

"I think it's lovely," Hall told Adventist News Network in a telephone interview from Mae Sot, Tak, Thailand, where Eden Valley Academy is located. "I hope it makes it easier for us to raise funds" for the school, which is supported by donations.

The third of a million Karen people are tribal and live in the foothills of the Dauna mountain range in Northwest Thailand along a border shared with Myanmar (formerly Burma). The Karen are Burmese refugees, and the Thai government keeps them confined to refugee camps. For many years the government's policy has restricted education for the Karen to primary level.

It was in 1980, while on a bus trip from Katmandu, Nepal, to London,

"I came for one year 25 years ago, and it just sort of grew when they asked me to run a school."

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

- 4 -

Helen Hall—
Woman of Spirit

- 6 -

Consider Women
in Leadership

- 8 -

Women Survivors
Become Wounded Healers

- 12 -

Harambe Success Story

Message from the President

Finding our voice



Verla Michel Kwiram

Carefully taught, we conscientious women continue to subdue ourselves to serve quietly, submitting to the decisions of others, humbly accepting the jobs that others don't choose to do, because—well, just because we want everything to run smoothly and without too much fuss. And we daily pray that we will be more like Jesus.

Therefore, self-promotion is not our goal. We are slightly embarrassed to be

chosen as spokespersons because we are comfortable with men up front, taking the lead. We don't want to push for position, because we are not seeking the limelight, for its own sake. What would Jesus do?

In modest humility we promote others, building their self-esteem, letting them glow in the limelight, and quietly taking satisfaction from their development. If our children can succeed, that is enough. If our sons can finish professional school or get an MBA and our daughters can marry well, we can count our work a success. If our husbands gain some distinction, that will be satisfaction enough.

We toil in quiet obscurity without a lot of resistance to the status quo. Our needs and problems remain unarticulated. Others interpret our passivity as contentment. Besides, we don't have time to do push our agenda. Our plates are already full.

When we are nominated to positions of leadership and our nominations fail because we are women, we protest not for ourselves because our modesty prevents it, although we know that the pseudo-religious reasons given for keeping us out of positions are not valid.

We don't want to rock the boat. We don't want to make men nervous. We never want to appear self-seeking. After all, aren't we the reason that evil entered the world? Do we not bear the curse of Eve?

But what does the church lose when we stay in our place, in our forever-supporting role? Who else can articulate our needs and those of women around us? Who else can balance the excesses that inevitably arise when

no counterforce exists? Who else will care when another woman suffers pain in silence—pain that we know and sometimes feel?

Who else will speak out when a woman is shoved, slapped, and roughed up? How many men fight domestic abuse or pave a way for education when a young woman has given up her training to pay for a brother or a husband's tuition? Who helps when she is consigned to menial work because no one cared enough to help her qualify for a better position? Who advocates for the woman infected by her lover with sexually transmitted diseases? Who is concerned for the woman infected with HIV/AIDS because her husband took a mistress?

We women comprise 70-75% of the membership of our church community. Yet our needs have not found a central place in the agenda of the church. What is wrong with this picture?

More like Jesus we would be...more of His love who died for me.... Yes, if we want to be like Jesus, we cannot ignore the needs of the women around us. Jesus sensitively and courageously reached out to express the needs and heal the wounds of broken-hearted women around Him. He ignored societal expectations to touch the untouchables—poor women. He healed through sympathetic understanding women who had been violated and abused. He lifted others, and we admire Him and want to emulate His every act. But without finding our voice, we cannot lift others. Without empowerment, we cannot empower others. Without courage and wisdom, we cannot resist exploitation.

To be like Jesus we have no choice. We must take our seats at the table. We must articulate our needs. We must speak our truths. We must learn to practice a pro-active compassion. We must sometimes rock the boat, upset the status quo, or even offend those with entrenched interests. We must sacrifice to keep girls in school, developing them with literacy and skills. We must break down the barriers that silence us. WE must find our voice. Because if we do not overcome our hesitancy, so many others are consigned to living exploited and oppressed lives.

In this issue, we are featuring women who practice active compassion, who act effectively to help young women succeed, who stand up to privilege and the status quo on behalf of those who have not yet found their voices. By practicing empowerment, they are empowering others. By naming their own needs, they are helping other women speak.

Verla Michel Kwiram
AAW President

Comments from Readers

Enclosed is my AAW membership renewal. I don't want to miss any issue of this fine, improved journal! I can't attend meetings elsewhere than here. I just turned 89 and retired from the Seminary faculty after 46 years (my third or fourth career). Best wishes to AAW!
*Leona G. Running,
 Berrien Springs,
 Michigan*

I have enjoyed your newsletter through the years. Keep up the good work.
Ruthe Fordham Perkins, Huntsville, Alabama

I was so very impressed with the ministries you described in the Women of the Year awards and would like to be a part of some of them. I have enclosed a check for three of these ministries. May God bless you as you bless them.
*Glenna J. Eady,
 Auburn, California*

Send your comments concerning *The Adventist Woman* to PO Box 25025, Seattle, WA 98165-1925. Or e-mail our editor, Carolyn Lacy, at carolynlacy137@verizon.net.

Hall Honored from page 1

England, that the great need of Asian children caught Hall's attention. Upon return from her trip, she took a leave of absence from her Australian position to teach in a Thai government school among the Karen people.

After a couple of years in Thailand, Hall founded Eden Valley Academy, which soon extended to higher levels. Several graduates have gone on to education in other schools,



Helen Hall with Karen girls and guests: Barbara Sadler (Kempsey, Australia), Joy Butler (Wahroonga, New South Wales, Australia), and Marja McChesney (Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington, USA).

including Adventist-owned Mission College, with most returning to help their people.

"I came for one year 25 years ago, and it just sort of grew when they asked me to run a school," Hall explained when asked about her involvement.

What keeps her working amid hardship, danger, and lack of personal comfort? "It's the kids and the needs of the people," said Hall. She noted that she was "drawn" by the resilience of the Karen people, who have endured much over the past three decades. Cross-border fighting and disease, together with other complications, have plagued these people. She lives daily with the threat of malaria, poisonous snakes, rogue elephants, mortar bombs, and attacks by soldiers.

Hall noted that the school

needs a new roof, and that "when it rains, we all go home for the day," because conditions are so difficult.

During the summer months, when it is too hot for classes, the entire school is dismantled and put in storage against theft or destruction. Hall has built Eden Valley school a total of seven times. The original school burned down twice and has been dismantled and moved several times.

Hall told the Adventist News Network that more than 1,500 students from the school have been baptized as Seventh-day Adventist Christians. The Karen people respond to the Gospel message, Hall said, because of an ancient tribal legend in which the people are told to eat a "golden book" that is sent to them; when missionaries came with the Bible, they accepted it readily. **AW**

Adventist News Network and other sources

Helen Hall—Woman of Spirit

By Joy Butler
Director of Women's Ministries
South Pacific Division

January 23, 2006

For the fourth time in 15 years, I have visited Helen Hall at Mae Ramart in northwest Thailand, on the border of Myanmar. She is an intrepid, determined, energetic lady who has worked for 25 years with the Karen people, part of the 180,000 refugees who have been pushed out of their country and now live on the edge of Thailand.

Helen lives in a two- to three-room rented house with 16 Thai/Karen young people (Thai/Karen means they have identity

... she has seen some 1,500 to 2,000 baptized as a result of her ministry. Hundreds of young people are working as teachers, secretaries, ministers, and in other professions and trades throughout Asia as a result of her teaching.

papers), who have come up through her primary school. They cook for her and live in her house. She lives in one small room, with books, papers, posters, and wall hangings honouring her work among these people. The girls sleep on the floor in the big room and the boys sleep on the veranda. Cooking is done on the lower level in a veranda-like space.

The bathroom is a separate corrugated iron structure with a concrete tub of cold water into which she dips a container for water to slosh over her soapy body every day. She doesn't miss hot water, she says, even on the cold mornings during the "winter" of Thailand. The toilet is a typical "stand-over-porcelain affair" used extensively throughout Asia. She attends meetings of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) once a month in Bangkok, travelling by bus all night, going to meetings all day, and returning by bus all night to start school the next morning.

Enrollment at Eden Valley Academy each year is approximately 800, from primary through Year 12. She prepares the Year 12 students for their O-level examinations, a requirement to continue with higher education. The primary grades meet in a bamboo school up the hill. During the 25 years

she has worked among the Karen, she has seen some 1,500 to 2,000 baptized as a result of her ministry. Hundreds of young people are working as teachers, secretaries, ministers, and in other professions and trades throughout Asia as a result of her teaching. She herself teaches up to 36 periods a week.

A woman of great faith and tenacity, she trusts the Lord to bring her through major discouragements and some fearful times. She has had to battle elephants, soldiers, authorities, and the military with guns coming to kill her. She believes the angels have guarded her house on a number of occasions. One time, forty soldiers, coming in boats, capsized and were drowned. Many times God has given her courage to carry on. She also receives encouragement from former students who thank her for her work among the Karen people.

January 24

Today we awaken at six to the sound of Thai music and then the news broadcast by loudspeakers throughout the town of Mae Ramart—not an irritating sound but a little annoying at such an early, dark hour. After abluting in the corrugated iron bathroom with a bucket of cold water, Helen collects us and we are off to breakfast at her house, where she houses 16 young people, a young dog, and a new cat, at last! She is fond of animals and treats them well.

With all the kids on the back of the truck and we five in the front, we drive to the school, 25 minutes away along a now-paved road through the jungle, with many military and police checkpoints for drug smugglers and stray refugees along the way.

The refugee camp is huge—more than 60,000 people live in an area a few kilometres long and less wide on a rocky hillside bordering Burma, where they have lived for the past 22 years after fleeing their homeland. The houses are stacked side by side, with very little privacy and virtually no room for gardens. The residents are dependent on handouts from the UN and other NGOs or the Thai government.

There are three high schools and five primary schools in this one refugee camp. Helen's school, Eden Valley High School, which has relocated seven times in the past 22 years, is set among the bamboo houses and shops. In one long bamboo building with thatched leaking roof, there are more than 500 students trying to learn and sit for exams. The classrooms are separated by blue fabric sheets, which are pushed aside to create a huge open hall. The desks are crude wood with benches, each of which is able to seat four or five kids. These hundreds of children are attentive and grateful for education. They hope to one day be able to venture outside the camp and find work, hope, and a future. They have never known any other life than the refugee camp. Their parents and grandparents talk of home and open space and the land they love across the ridge and the

river just above their makeshift houses. When they fled from their oppressors 22 years ago, they thought it was just for a short time, until the next monsoon.

Down the dusty rocky track, across a muddy river where women wash clothes, up another track, and past many bamboo houses, we arrive at the primary school, where another 260 children sit at the same type of desks but without separation of curtains for each class. Each group watches the teacher in front, writing on the board. All the teachers for both schools are either graduates from high school or young teachers who have come from India or Burma, willing to help their own people. Fifty-eight girls live in a two-level bamboo shelter/dormitory on bare floors with their few belongings around them.

The people in this camp are always uncertain about when the Burmese army might come across, shoot them, or rape the women. These people are not allowed outside the camp (which is surrounded by barbed wire fence) except to walk the length of the camp on the tar-sealed road. Their lives are completely restricted. They have set up organizations, programs, and self-help educational systems to keep their spirit alive and to take

pride in their traditions and religions. There are Buddhists, Animists, Catholics, Baptists, and Seventh-day Adventists.

Helen is now 67 and there to stay—she has no intention of returning to live in Australia. She is not to be stopped, and she will carry on. She is dedicated and devoted to these precious people who have such limited opportunities. She has continued the work of Eric B. Hare with the Karen people, but in a slightly different location. Some of her students are grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Hare's students. One or two people in the camp are actually featured in his books.

With energy and enthusiasm for the new day engulfing us all, she hugs us three women, waves us off, and drives up the road with her truck of kids, eager to begin the next exams. We wave back in admiration for her and for her ability to survive all odds despite such dismal surroundings. We respect this lady who receives her Order of Australia tomorrow from the Australian government and Prime Minister. Praise God, she deserves it. How proud we can be of this woman of spirit, this woman of courage and faith. God bless you, Helen! **AW**

Graduation at Eden Valley Academy By Carolyn Lacy

Where did they get the caps and gowns for graduation? I know Helen's resourcefulness is legendary, but how did she pull that off in her remote corner of Thailand?

That's the question that popped into my head as I looked at the photos of the graduation at Eden Valley Academy you see in this issue of *The Adventist Woman*. Here is Helen's response.

"We have two teachers, our former students newly returned from Spicer, and they took charge of most of the arrangements for graduation. One Sunday the students made rice sweets and other Karen delicacies, and we got ice and made drinks, which were sold. Everyone came and spent money on these things.

"The money raised was used to buy material for the gowns, a present from the class to the school, and other graduation items. We are really getting with it. The gowns were sewn by an Indian seamstress in the camp.

"My biggest problem was that the teachers wanted to pass the entire class, whether they passed or failed, so they

could wear graduation gowns! The blue gowns were Year 12 graduates, and the red gowns were worn by Year 10 students.

"This is the first year we have had Year 10 grads. It is the fashion here in Thailand, but in Australia we reserve the honour for Year 12. Only half of the Year 10 passed, but they will probably pass the Division exam from India, which is easier. However, a number have chosen to repeat so they can march in gowns.

"An enormous crowd came to graduation. People from camps way up north in Thailand as well as those way down south got permission to come for the graduation. It was a lot of fun and a lot of hard work." **AW**



Consider Women in Leadership

By Taashi Rowe,
Adventist News Network

Rose Otis [a 2003 AAW Woman of the Year] was 12 years old when Velma Bevins, a young pastor's wife, moved to her town in Michigan.

"To me she was the epitome of a wholesome Christian woman. She was such a gracious woman," Otis recalled. "She sang and talked up front. She was the first woman I wanted to emulate. I always saw her as someone who opened my eyes to being a woman of influence in the Adventist Church."

For Otis, and many others like her, it was an aunt, a family friend, a Bible study teacher, or a choir director who set the example of female leadership. Today, as leaders in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its affiliated organizations, five women shared with ANN their experiences on the way to these posts, their opinions on women leaders in the church, and advice for younger women who want to work for the church.

The Pioneer

In time, Otis grew to serve the Adventist Church in several posts that were firsts for women. She was the first director for Women's Ministries for the world church. She then became the first female vice president for the church in North America. As the first Women's Ministries director, Otis spent six years laying the groundwork for the department.

"I tried to demonstrate how women could really lift the church, how many talents and gifts were not being utilized by not including women, and how they can be used if we only encouraged women more," she said.

"I saw lots of change in attitudes since I was there. Having Women's Ministries programs has brought women out of the pews to organize initiatives from local church levels all the way to the world regional offices."

The Administrator

As president and chief executive officer at St. Helena Adventist Hospital in California, JoAline Olson [a 2002 AAW Woman of the Year] is well aware of what it means to be one of the few women in the upper echelons of an organization.

She says she and her husband try to teach their two teenage daughters that life is not limited by gender.

"The world is changing," she said. "There are more and more women becoming CEOs of hospitals.

"But it is also important for women to exercise

leadership wherever they are," she continued. "Leadership isn't just for certain defined roles. Lead where you are, lead out in your local church in Sabbath School or as a deaconess. Some of the most influential people are those in unofficial roles."

The Advocate

Heather-Dawn Small's career in leading out started when she was appointed to teach the kindergarten class at her local church. She was only 12 years old. After years of taking on progressively more responsibility in her church, she made the decision in her first year of college to become a pastor. But it was 1977 and she was living on the Caribbean island of Trinidad, where she was pressured to drop theology.

"At that time women who did theology could only become Bible workers, and I kept thinking it was unfair because to be a Bible worker you only need a two-year degree, but a theology degree meant four years of college," she reminisced.

Small decided she never wanted to work for the church again. But here she is in 2006 serving as the director for Women's Ministries for the world church.

"The Lord called me and I couldn't say no," she explained. In this role Small works with women all over the world, helping them find ways to contribute meaningfully to their churches. She encourages Adventist women to fully utilize their talents, provides leadership training and resource materials, and works closely with church administrators to learn how Women's Ministries programs can complement and support existing programs in the church.

"The biggest obstacle to accepting women as leaders is our mindset," said Small. "We need a change in mindset so that when we think of leadership, we don't automatically think of men. We must re-frame our mindset to include women."

She added, "When the first woman vice president was elected, I was very surprised. I was elated and overjoyed. I definitely think it is a step in the right direction because what happens on the top levels of the church filters down."

The Vice President

Reflecting on her historic appointment as the first female vice president for the Adventist world church, Dr. Ella Simmons said it truly signals hope for change.

| continued on page 7

Adventist Women Advocate Gender Equality at United Nations

Seven Seventh-day Adventist women added their voices to thousands of other women in calling for drastic improvements in the lives of women worldwide at the United Nations' 50th Session on the Commission on the Status of Women. The meeting in New York City ran until March 10 and was attended by the Adventist delegation from February 27 to March 3.

"The denial of women's rights touches every aspect of women's lives," explained Viola Hughes, the church's United Nations liaison specialist, who led the delegation. "The conference [considered] themes in gender equality and enhancing participation of women in development," she added.

One of the statements that came out of the meetings was: Rights violations occur whenever women are denied access to property or employment, face violence within their homes, or cannot claim fair representation with their government.

More than 6,000 women came to the meeting representing non-governmental organizations, all walks of life and countries, such as Vietnam, Nigeria, Lebanon, Iraq, Burma, China, and Peru.

Two departments at the Adventist Church's world headquarters, Women's Ministries and Public Affairs and Religious Liberty, worked together to write a statement addressing the challenges women face around the world. It was first submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women last January. The statement was later modified and about 1,000 copies were distributed at this meeting. The modified statement outlines the six challenge issues women face globally: illiteracy; poverty; threats to health; workload; abuse; and lack of training, mentoring, and leadership opportunities. **AW**

Adventist News Network bulletin:
March 14, 2006

African Orphan Scholarships

by Amy Symons

Amy Symons, an attorney, visited Nyalwodep, Kenya, for two months in 2005. She is a graduate of George Washington University School of Law. She became acquainted with the orphans at Alice Ouma's Nyalwodep project and is now trying to assist a few of them with their educational expenses.

Victor Odoul, a total orphan adopted by Phelgona Odoul, who is a member of the Nyalwodep project. He is a good student at one of the best schools in the country. He will be going into his third year at St. Mary's School, Yala. It is an excellent school and well worth the tuition. His school fees this year will be 25,000 Ksh. (app. \$360).

Tina Martin Turner is the granddaughter of Edwina Orek, who is a member of the Nyalwodep project. She was a very good Standard 8 student, number one in her class, and she was accepted at Ngiya Girls Secondary School. Her school fees will be 27,100 Ksh. (app. \$380).

Akinyi Teresa Pata is the daughter of Joan Pata. She was also accepted to Ngiya Girls Secondary School. Her school fees will be 27,100 Ksh. (app. \$380).

Martin Pata is Joan's son. He will be going into his fourth year at Rambala Secondary School. His school fees will be about 32,000 Ksh. (app. \$450). **AW**

How can you help?

If you are touched by the stories in this issue about the dedicated Adventist women around the world and would like to contribute to their work, send your donation payable to the **Association for Adventist Women** and indicate on your check which project you are supporting. AAW will forward your funds to the project(s) indicated, and you will receive a tax deduction.

African Orphan Scholarships	\$ _____
Harambe Women's Forum	\$ _____
Helen Hall / Eden Valley Academy	\$ _____
Nyalwodep Well	\$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Women in Leadership from page 6

"I never thought about coming to the [world church] and holding this position. I expected certain changes to occur but never thought they would include me," said Simmons.

"We have to be willing to accept responsibility when it comes to an appointment set outside of our comfort zone, or we won't have the right to speak out against injustice," she said.

The Educator

Dr. Myrna Costa, president of Antillean Adventist University in Puerto Rico, agreed. She also advises other women who aspire to leadership to make sure God leads the way.

"The problem, as I see it, is that many women want to open their own doors, and that is when they fail. They open their own doors

and when they fail, they blame the system or they blame others, but never themselves. My advice: be humble, prepare yourself academically and professionally, and get enough experience; then do your job efficiently ... doors will open and opportunities will be offered. I believe if God wants us in positions, He will open the doors," she concluded. **AW**

Challenges Women Face

How They Become Survivors And Wounded Healers

by
Zandile Nhlengetwa

Director, Harambe Women's Forum for Survivors
of Violence, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa



Background

The South African apartheid system, institutionalized when the Nationalist Government took power in 1948, supplanted African traditions with a culture of violence. The violence evolved in stages from 1948 to 1993, and persisted even beyond the elections of 1994. This article describes events from 1985 to 1997.

Introduction

"I have lost hope and trust in humanity. Revenge is the option now. Did God allow these painful experiences to break us and not to strengthen us?" Cecilia Maduna (Bhambayi Women's Group)

AAW: Hearing the expression of such feelings of hurt, anger, and despair, one wonders if the miracle of transformation, witnessed by South Africans and the world, meant reconciliation. Can it be true that everyone emerged with no trace of bitterness or hatred after half a lifetime in captivity?

Apartheid robbed people not only of hard-earned material possessions, but also of their cultural values, that sense of belonging and identity, undermining family and community life, the backbone of African society. It wounded all, and a dignified and respectful closure is needed.

AAW: What is the background of the political violence?

The legacy of blood, revenge, and hatred is there, calling urgently for a return to humility (*ubuntu*) to avoid retaliation and vengeance. After liberation, fragmentation and mutual distrust pervaded all levels, even to members of the same family when political violence divided them. People were in need of reconciliation throughout

the spectrum from individuals and families to communities and the entire nation. During individual healing, there is a need to identify violent events in the larger community that impacted heavily on emotions.

Plight of Women

AAW: War and conflict affect women and children profoundly. How have the women in South Africa been affected?

They are severely affected, disempowered, and lack ways to improve their condition. They bear multiple emotional and physical scars; many are displaced, out of contact with their extended family support network, leaving them vulnerable to abuse. Women feel the need to be 'attached' to a man to receive basic community rights. In Bhambayi, for example, women have been denied the right to own houses and are dependent on men, often initial strangers, for support. Some women in the Harambe program, willing to work toward peace and reconciliation, are trapped in traditional roles. This hampers their ability to deal with issues, and many have to seek other avenues to peace.

AAW: How has the culture changed because of the violence?

Before the violence, women were powerless; the patriarchal society treated them as minors, but within that system they were given roles in which they could express themselves. They were seen as the backbone of society. The system stripped them of those roles. Although a woman could not own land, when a husband died, his wife had the right to keep and care for the family property. Apartheid changed that; since the woman was a minor, a male family member had to assume headship. If

none was available, the property was taken from the woman and given to other families, under which she lived, as their minor.

Women's Economic Strategies

AAW: Women who lost husbands in the war need ways to support themselves and their children. What is the situation in KwaZulu-Natal?

When families are displaced by violence, women are the principal victims. Forty to forty-five percent of households are headed by women, some widowed during the conflict, some caring for husbands injured in the conflict, some divorced, some separated or single. They face difficult economic conditions, aggravated here by their low socio-economic level. Some have five or six children to care for. Most women run a small business such as selling food items on the street, or they build small mud 'Tuck Shops.' It is unstable, hand to mouth, and doesn't provide any surplus for saving or utilizing additional resources. Most rural women work in the fields, particularly sugar cane. They do most of the sowing, transplanting, harvesting, and threshing. It is physically exhausting work, and dangerous because of poisonous snakes.

Status of Women Without a Male Partner

AAW: What has happened to women who lost their partners in the conflict?

In many communities there arose an imbalance in the numbers of men and

e in Conflict Situations:

women. Single, divorced, separated, or widowed women are scorned and ridiculed. Many are forced into a polygamous relation for economic or protective reasons. At times such women prefer to go out only during the day, when danger of rape is less. If a husband is handicapped, his wife continues to live with him as ordinary family; if the situation is reversed, however, a handicapped woman often cannot keep her husband at home. She is often left with her children while her husband marries another woman, leaving his handicapped former wife without support.

More Work, No Voice

AAW: Do women with such increased responsibilities receive any support from the community?

It's hard to access the resources needed for the added responsibility. Councilors and elders are exclusively male; women have no role in community decision-making. They may be given hard work, but they earn very little money, being single or widowed, or because they belong to a different political party. Men have tended to resist including women in making decisions about resources. Women report cases of abuse to the council, but decisions often favor the perpetrator, and sometimes the outcome of the case will never be known.

Conflict and HIV/AIDS

AAW: HIV/AIDS is now epidemic in Africa. What factors do you see contributing to the spread of this disease?

In KwaZulu-Natal, HIV/AIDS now affects every village and every section of the community. Women are affected, not only through their own sexual activity, but also as mothers, wives, and grandmothers of AIDS patients.

Substantial numbers of women are now infected with AIDS. Even when a woman knows her husband has had other partners, her low status, fear of violence and rejection, and the perception that wives are obliged to provide sex, all place immense barriers to women being able to protect themselves.

There is a prevalent belief that a faithful woman cannot contract AIDS, which we now know is false. Increasingly, more women than men are testing positive for HIV. Some of the reasons are:

- A woman may feel herself at a disadvantage in insisting on safer sex, be it with her regular partner, as a sex worker, and certainly during rape. They fear rejection and abandonment if they begin to discuss infidelity with their husbands or partners.
- A woman may be under the sexual control of her partner who provides for her or her children.
- Polygamous marriages are still common, as is the custom of a brother-in-law taking his brother's widow and progeny under his care and protection.
- Rape is seen in all our communities, especially those that have been ravaged by violent conflict and discrimination.

There are many fears, myths, and legends which create a link between HIV

infection and girl-child sexual abuse; for example:

- Prevention Theory – based on the assumption that all sexually active people are likely to be HIV infected. An uninfected person wishing for safe sex must seek an uninfected partner, by implication not yet sexually active. The only sure group that meet this criterion are from four to ten years old. Thus, an increasing number of young girls are being targeted for safe sexual relationships.
- Cleansing theory – suggests that by engaging in sexual relations with a virgin, the virus can be passed from the infected one to the partner, the infected one being thus cleansed of the virus.
- Retribution theory – reflects a belief prevalent in peri-urban settings. People who know they are infected deliberately try to spread the infection, resulting in indiscriminate transmission to all.

Harambe's Women's Forum Intervention Strategies

AAW: What you have just related is an overview of the situation with women in the communities where Harambe Women's Forum facilitates women's empowerment programs. What is the Harambe Women's Forum?

It is a community-based, non-profit organization, started by a group of women who felt an urge to break the cycle of violence and to empower women to create a safe environment for their children and

| continued on page 10

About the Author

Zandile Nhlengetwa, leader of the Harambe Women's Forum, is a South African woman from the province of KwaZulu-Natal. She is a widow and mother of two children: son Thuthuka is completing his studies for a Bachelor of Commerce degree in Marketing, and daughter Silindile is a Civil Engineer Technician.

Zandile grew up in the Adventist Church and attended Adventist institutions in South Africa, graduating as a primary school teacher from Bethel College. During her formative years, the apartheid system was at its height, but the church remained silent about the abuse and itself practiced the apartheid system. Students who were vocal about issues that were taking place in the country were



immediately expelled.

Following graduation, as her interest in political activity increased, her involvement with the church decreased. She married a young man, also an activist, who died in 1989 during the violence. A group of widows began meeting in her home to support one another. They discussed their pain, frustration, and ways to support their children. In 1994, she expanded this work to communities with young men—ex-combatants carrying anger and pain because they had killed many people.

Although political violence has subsided, Zandile realized that the plight of women is still prevalent. With four other women who were as passionate as

| continued on page 14

themselves. Since 2002 it has offered support to women in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, focusing on community mental health, community development, HIV/AIDS, career development, and poverty alleviation. A group of us decided to do something, especially for women and children who are the principal victims

sides of conflict situations. We work toward merging these groups, but it is a slow process that must be taken at a speed dictated by the local political situation.

AAW: Why is it necessary to have violence prevention and peace-making as one of Harambe's programs?

Given the on-going violence in

environment. This has opened up work with other art forms such as creative writing.

Our greatest challenge is that most of the women in the program cannot read or write. We are introducing the need of literacy programs to the local council, and trying to find a non-governmental organization that deals with literacy programs.

AAW: In what ways does Harambe Women's Forum educate women about HIV/AIDS?

As part of prevention activities:

- We incorporate issues of violence against women

into HIV/AIDS prevention

and counseling activities. We openly address power relations, gender-based oppression, and patriarchy in society, which makes women more vulnerable to contracting HIV/AIDS even if they are informed about it.

- We promote interventions that empower girl-children and young women to negotiate safer sex and reject violence. These include promoting economic empowerment and self-esteem. Both empower girls and women to know who they are and to control what they want for their own lives. They are better able to say "No" to abusive relationships, unwanted sexual relationships, and unsafe sex.
- We urge women, especially young women, to attend clinics regularly and have check-ups for sexually transmitted diseases. Many women shun the clinics and do not seek treatment for an STD, rather bearing the pain and discomfort as part of a woman's life.
- We support the Treatment Action Campaign which lobbies for decreased

"These experiences of pain and hurt have broken my spirits, but I am going to use my pain to heal myself and some women who are in similar circumstances as mine. The pain and hurt have really given me strength."

Nontu Mbhele (50 years old)

of violence and conflict. We met because we saw ourselves as survivors. We saw that God had intervened in our lives in a remarkable way. Although we lost loved ones and possessions, we say, "Lord, it could have been worse if it was not through your Divine intervention." Hence we felt strongly the need to do something about the plight of women who are in similar situations.

We operate and facilitate these programs on a weekly basis, in a local community, in a venue chosen by participants and by leaders of that community. All work is done on a voluntary basis, after receiving training in community development, conflict management, and trauma management. Most of the women who go through our programs are now helping other women.

Developing Community-based Intervention Strategies

AAW: How does Harambe Women's Forum go about its work?

We first target those communities that were badly affected, mobilizing structures and individuals to initiate and maintain ownership/ sponsorship for strategies to be implemented. These include workshops for employed and non-employed women, girl children, and men, with projects for training in employment skills, anti-drug campaigns, and conflict resolution. These groups provide a strong social support structure, controlled and owned by the women themselves. In several instances we have been forced to run separate and parallel groups for people of opposing

KwaZulu-Natal, preventive intervention is extremely important. The programs are based on the understanding that political differences alone cannot explain the continuing violence. We take into account a range of factors, including a history of military oppression, partial policing, political manipulation through the instruments of law and order, and the lack of resources and opportunities in many areas of the province. We monitor situations carefully, and actively engage in mediation as required.

AAW: Another of your programs is counseling and debriefing. Who are the people needing this program?

It is for survivors of rape, child abuse, assault, murder of family members, and vehicle hijacking. Most of this work does not operate as a drop-in clinic or trauma-center type or arrangement, but occurs with local target communities.

AAW: What is involved in the creative arts program of Harambe?

Here women are taught sewing and the making of beads and grass mats. When

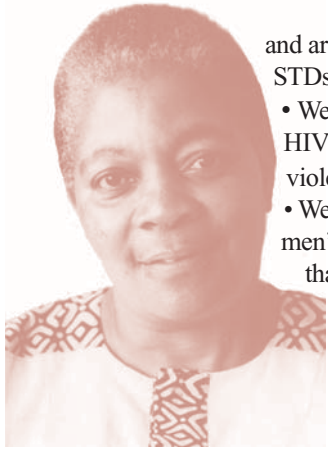
"I have been torn inside like a cloth in shreds, but meeting here, meeting other women, I have felt like the shreds in my spirit are recreated. Each time I attend and go back home, one of my parts is sewn together."

Thembi Nhleko (49 years old)

products are completed, they are sold to communities and at the flea market. This has been an exciting way to work through painful experiences and toward poverty alleviation. In this program, women are able to tell their stories in a non-threatening

costs for HIV/AIDS medication. With better treatment and self-care, a woman can live longer and care for her own children.

- We lobby for wellness clinics where girls and women are treated with respect



and are being educated about STDs at the same time.

- We incorporate issues of HIV/AIDS into activities on violence against women.
- We address the context of men's lives by suggesting that fidelity, responsibility to one's partner, and condom use are compatible with masculinity.

• We assist communities in formation of support groups for the infected and the affected.

AAW: You mentioned that one of Harambe's programs is to educate women about domestic violence.

We help women to understand how this type of violence affects their lives. In post-conflict societies there is an increase in domestic violence, an increase in criminal violence, and all forms of abuse, including substance abuse. We deal with the following issues in our weekly domestic violence workshops:

- Battering — Physical Violence: We emphasize that even a small incident should be taken seriously, because once violence is used, it will be repeated with increasing frequency and severity; it is best to stop it at the outset. Sexual violence often starts with degrading jokes, name calling, unwanted touching, unfavorable comparisons with other women. Women often find themselves lacking power or the right to refuse unwelcome advances.
- Emotional, Verbal, Psychological Abuse — We make women aware that they are abused when they are made to feel useless, that nothing they do is good enough. Psychological: a man may threaten suicide or harm a woman's property or kidnap her children. Verbal: a man may attack a woman's personality, attitudes, or beliefs, or may belittle any efforts she makes to improve herself. Emotional: a man may treat a woman as though she has no needs and exists only to serve him. He can control her activities, disrupt routines, deprive her of food or sleep, or isolate her from her friends or family.
- Economic Abuse: Here we facilitate discussions about how an abuser uses money to undermine the woman. He

may spend money on himself and give her only a pittance to support the family; he may accuse her of stealing money; he may accuse her of using family money for her own benefit only.

- Spiritual Abuse: A man may exploit a woman's faith to keep her from finding help or leaving an abusive situation by telling her that she must endure, submit, and make sure she doesn't do anything to upset her husband. She is continually told that this is her fault; if she seeks to leave, it is because she is un-Christian and will be condemned by God. The Bible is continually quoted to her, particularly texts that serve to put her in her place, condemn divorce, or glorify suffering.

Men's Program

AAW: Have you found it difficult to empower women in a patriarchal society?

It is very challenging, even to introduce to councilors and leaders the idea of working with men. When we sought

offer all these services to women?

Networking is our right hand. We rely on other organizations to take some of our load. It is a challenge because sometimes highly skilled individuals wanted to be paid, and we have no resources for that.

Lobbying and Raising Awareness

AAW: Are there opportunities for you to make political changes that will have lasting effects for the lives of women?

An important spin-off of networking is lobbying decision-makers. We have contributed to the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Health Act and written a paper on Social Welfare. In addition, we participate in a range of forums and committees, including KwaZulu-Natal Victim Empowerment Forum.

Challenges That We Face

AAW: You face enormous challenges and yet appear undaunted. Tell us of some immediate needs.

- Specialized training, such as working with rape victims.

“When I first attended these workshops, I was only looking for hand-outs, but these weekly meetings have changed my attitude. I am confident of my future and am very proud that God created me a woman.” Ntombi Nsele (36 years old)

the cause of a decline in participation at our workshops, we found that battering had increased in their homes. Men felt threatened, and increased physical abuse, not only at home, but at community meetings when women started contributing. We decided we needed to work with men.

The first workshop was entitled “Men of Quality Are Not Afraid of Equality—Real Men Do Not Abuse Women and Children.” The program is just a year old, and we can't claim any success yet. We meet once a month during council meetings. We are still in the trust-building phase.

Training-for-Trainers Program

AAW: You obviously need more workers. Are you training helpers?

Yes, we have developed a successful training program for women to do this work in their own communities.

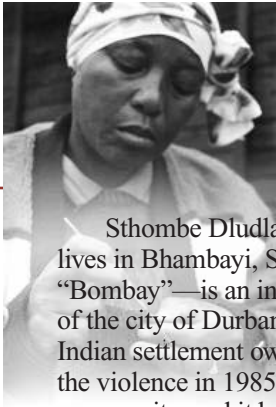
Networking

AAW: How do you manage to operate such a complex program and

- Training in project management and time scheduling.
- Training in proposal writing, to seek funding.
- Training in community development and financial management.
- A service vehicle for carrying crafts to market and for ferrying AIDS sufferers to the nearest clinic.

AAW: How has the Harambe Women's Forum affected you and your volunteers, and what are your plans for the future?

It has been a healing process for us, giving us strength to continue working for other women victims. Demand is increasing; we try to work with both perpetrator and victim, because both are victims of a system orchestrated by powers of darkness. Future plans: looking into issues of the “bride price.” Many types of abuse are linked to the custom of paying for a bride. We are also looking at finding a non-governmental organization that deals with issues of basic reading and writing for adults. *AW*



WOUNDED HEALER

Sthombe Dlodla, a 45-year-old South African woman, lives in Bhambayi, South Africa. *Bhambayi*—a Zulu name for “Bombay”—is an informal settlement located in the north area of the city of Durban, Natal. This settlement was initially an Indian settlement owned by Mahatma Gandhi’s family. During the violence in 1985 the Indian settlers were chased out of the community, and it became an area for many people who were displaced because of political violence.

Dlodla is now the chairperson of Intuthuko Women’s Development Group and has contributed a great deal toward changing the status of women in this community. For example, in the past, women were not allowed to own a house if they were single. When the husband died, the family house was forfeited. Women were forced to have relationships in order to own a house. Dlodla and a number of women who became activists are changing this system. Her story gives a hint of the life experiences many South African women have endured and testifies to the scale of her accomplishments.

To understand Dlodla’s experience, one must understand the context in which she grew up. One of the byproducts of the apartheid system in South Africa was migrant labor. Often families were fragmented and became dysfunctional because both parents were absent, looking for work. It was not unusual that those who left never returned and never again contacted the families they left behind. They would normally start other relationships and build new families. Dlodla comes from this background. When she was two years old, her parents left her with relatives and went to the city of Durban to look for greener pastures.

After leaving, Dlodla’s parents never again contacted their family in the rural area from which they came. The relatives ill-treated Dlodla because they considered her a burden. They had to feed and clothe her, and her parents never sent them money for her care. She lived with different uncles and aunts, who all rejected her and mistreated her. They did not allow her to start school. She looked after the family livestock while the boys went to school.

Dlodla’s prospects for a good marriage were irreparably damaged by the fact that at an early age she had experienced gang rape organized by one of her uncles. This event had caused her deep shame and much suffering.

When she was 18 years old, she was forced by an uncle into a marriage with an older man who paid a huge bride price for her. He became her common-law husband—common-law because their traditional marriage was never formally registered with the state. The “marriage” was official only between this man and her uncles and the small community in which they lived.

Although this man was known by the community to be abusive—it has been alleged that a number of younger women were his rape victims—becoming this man’s wife had seemed the better option for Dlodla because she would be abused by only one man. Still Dlodla was afraid; she cried uncontrollably on the day she was handed over to this man.

Dlodla’s sexual experience with her husband was terrible. She suffered emotionally and physically, falling into depression. When attempting to find a way to cope and come out of this depression, she decided to become a member of one of the African Independent Churches. But even in a Christian church, she sensed that she was not fully accepted by other members,

A Harambe Success Story

*When a woman heals,
she becomes empowered;
she becomes a wounded healer.*

especially women, because they considered her to be a woman of loose morals. It is a truism that a person who is raped is viewed by her community as a woman of very low morals.

Dlodla became desperate to leave her marriage and community when her common-law husband raped their two-year-old daughter. She reported the rape to the elders when she was advised to do so by the nurses at the local clinic. However, she was not called to attend the meeting. Her common-law husband attended as the accused. But not one single woman was at the meeting.

When her common-law husband left that morning to attend the meeting, he said, “Don’t you know that one who slaughters his own is not guilty?” (By this he meant, “I abused my own child, and no one will hold that against me; no one would find me guilty.”) He continued by saying, “You are good for nothing as a wife, hanging dirty linen for strangers to see. I will be meeting with your uncles, asking that they give me back part of the bride price I paid because you are not worth the cattle and the money I paid to them.”

The entire community knew about the meeting that was going to take place in the homestead of one of the elders. Dlodla had heard stories about this kind of abuse happening in a number of families, and she had vowed that if this happened in her own home she would expose the perpetrator.

Her uncles came to her and started reminding her that she was a nobody, and she must know that, with this action, she would burn all her bridges. She sat quietly in her house waiting for the outcome of the meeting. She had been promised that the outcome of the meeting would be shared with her. She trusted the elders because they were respected members of the community.

The meeting lasted the entire day, after which all the men who had attended began dancing, drinking, and having fun. She knew from the revelry that the meeting was over, but no one came to tell her about the outcome. She went to learn the decision from other women, who she thought would know because their husbands attended the meeting. She found a woman who was excited to share the news with her. She said, “Your husband was found guilty and fined one cattle, and the elders will come and choose one cattle from his kraal. He was reprimanded and instructed not to do it again.”

It infuriated Dlodla that her daughter’s defilement, the indignities heaped upon her, and the harm, pain, and hurt she had experienced were equivalent only to the value of a single cow. She felt she did not have a voice. The pain seared through her heart, and she felt torn inside. At that moment the suffering she experienced in her life washed over her. She knew that she could not take it any longer. She thought of what her husband would do to her when he returned. She realized she had indeed burned her bridges. The only thing left was to leave the community.

Dlodla felt no guilt about leaving this man, her extended family, or her community. She was supported by a few friends who gave her advice about going away and looking for her



Harambe women sharing their stories while creating goods for sale.

family. She thought of her mom and dad who had left when she was barely two years old. She was now twenty-one. Leaving this community was the best option for her and her daughter.

The decision was made. She sneaked away when her common-law husband was drunk and hid in the bushes not far from the main road. Because she had no money, she hoped to ask for a lift from a driver of one of the big trucks who travel that road to Durban. She had heard stories that usually such lifts came with the price of sexual favors. This was the least of her worries. She had learned over the years to separate her emotions from the action.

Her goal was to be in Durban and look for her parents. She was surprised to learn that big cities have huge populations—in the case of Durban, over 1.2 million people. Reality struck. She was introduced to prostitution, which provided her with shelter, money, and friends. She felt that prostitution restored her sense of self-direction or independence because what she was doing was her choice. She felt emboldened to choose which clients she wanted. She could decide, “Today I am not having clients.” And being able to make choices gave her a feeling of being in control of her life.

One of her regular clients proposed that they have a permanent relationship. She agreed. She abandoned the search for her parents and decided to make a home with her former client for her daughter. Dlodla and her partner then decided to settle in the informal settlement of Bhambayi. She bore three of his children. Together they created a good home.

Dlodla’s live-in partner was very active in politics; his political involvement created a lot of enemies. After the political violence started in the area, he was killed. Devastated, she remained on her own, taking care of her four children—three daughters and a son. One night while she was sleeping in her one-room shack near her children, she was awakened by men’s voices outside. She realized that she and her family were about to be attacked. Determined that she would not die without resisting, she whispered to her older daughter that they would need to fight these men, one of whom was prying at the window and another was trying to open the door. She instructed the younger children to hide under the bed, while she and her daughter stood armed with knives beside the window and door.

To their surprise, the men had guns. When Dlodla attacked the first man, he pulled the trigger and shot her. The children screamed and came out from under the bed. The second man pulled the trigger and shot her son. Her older daughter wrestled with the second man, and he overpowered her. Dlodla lay silent, pretending she was dead.

Neighbors could not come to their rescue because the situation was too dangerous. Whoever tried to help would also become a victim. The two younger girls were so frightened that they also remained silent. After taking turns in raping her older daughter, the men left.

While Dlodla was lying there bleeding, for the first time she prayed to God. She was praying for herself and her son. When the men left her house, weak as she was, she managed to stand up, and grabbing her son, realized he was still alive but weak. The police, having heard the gun shots, were looking for their source. They saw two men running. Both men were arrested, and they pointed out the house where they had been.

Dlodla and her son were taken to hospital immediately. She reported to the police that her daughter had been raped, and she was also taken to the hospital. Both Dlodla and her son recovered from the gunshot wounds. Then they learned the shocking news that her daughter had contracted HIV from the rape. That devastated both Dlodla and her daughter.

When her husband was killed, Dlodla had started looking for work, either in the sugar plantation or doing chores in people’s homes. This had allowed her to stay in her home, but the income had not been sufficient to feed four children. Now, medical expenses for her daughter increased her financial predicament.

Her daughter became withdrawn, and she lost the will to live. One day Dlodla was called to return home from where she was working for the day. She sensed something was not right at home. When she arrived, she found her daughter dead and was told she had committed suicide. This was devastating news for Dlodla.

After the funeral of her daughter, Dlodla lay awake all night thinking that she could not live like this for the rest of her life. She could not live with bitterness and regret. She needed to escape this situation. She needed to break the cycle.

At that time Harambe was introduced in the community as a non-profit organization to work with women. She joined out of curiosity. Like so many other women, she thought she would be getting food parcels. The first workshop she attended was on personal development. It was about identity, values and belief system, and healing from past, painful experiences. She became a regular at the weekly meetings. The topics of the workshops helped Dlodla make critical decisions in her life.

She knew she needed to heal first from her past experiences. She also knew that, if she was determined to change her life and the lives of her children, she needed to gain some skills. She joined a group that was running an income-generating project and attended workshops on leadership. As leader of her home, she knew she needed to live an exemplary life. All the empowerment she received boosted her confidence. Because she did not know how to read or write, she decided to attend literacy classes. In order to improve her chances for employment, she sought further training. Her children had fun helping their mother with her homework and reading lessons.

She was elected by her women’s group, Intuthuko Women, as the chairperson. *Intuthuko* means to develop, to move forward, to progress. She now counsels other women who are in abusive relationships, and she assists in home-based care for HIV/AIDS patients. She is a member of the community development forum, a male-dominated group that heretofore considered development as building houses, but Dlodla broadened the understanding of development to include personal, social, and economic development. She has become the women’s voice in the community.

Dlodla believes she still has challenges ahead of her. She always thinks about her rural community where she spent twenty years of her life and realizes that rural women need the Harambe program, too. She has become a strong support system for parents who have children who are HIV positive, seeing herself as a wounded healer. In one of the workshops she attended, she stood up and said, “I come from a background that does not encourage talking about pain and difficult experiences; hence we have idioms in my Zulu language, *gwinya itshe* (swallow a stone) or *fela phakathi* (die from within). I have experienced healing by talking about issues in these workshops. These workshops have assisted me to come to terms with my past, painful experiences. They have helped me to move forward with my life. I now advocate that as women we should talk about issues. Let us be vocal about abuse. Let us support one another in assuming roles of equality with men. We women are resilient. Let us trust God for courage and strength to pull through.” AW

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About the Author from page 9

she was about empowerment and healing of women, they decided to help other women similarly situated. Their approach was to first heal themselves before they began the work of assisting others. They gave themselves the name of *Harambe*, meaning "pulling together," and introduced themselves in the poverty-stricken community of Bhambayi. They continue their volunteer work in Bhambayi, despite the challenges of lack of funding, public transport, and promotion of equality for women. She writes, "God has blessed us with individuals who continue to support us."

She has returned to the church and finds that equality and meaningful leadership for women are still absent. In her local church, women are given the traditional roles of Sabbath School superintendent, children's ministry, and deaconess. Women elders and preachers are not promoted. She states, "Women themselves become their worst enemies, especially when one is single and talks about issues of equality. Married women shun you, and you are seen as a home breaker. But presently I am helping out in the Young Women's Ministry, and this group is very receptive to issues of equality." *AW*

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Association of Adventist Women

Mission Statement

The Association of Adventist Women seeks to develop and promote women as leaders in Seventh-day Adventist organizations, congregations, and communities.

Goals

The image of God, as embodied in the skills and insights of women, will be more fully reflected in our churches and communities as we achieve our goals:

To create significant opportunities for women to be full partners at all levels of church life.

To promote leadership skills among Adventist women of all ages and backgrounds.

To highlight Adventist women's opportunities, contributions, and achievements using print, electronic, and personal communications.

To establish a network of Adventist women leaders who can inspire and mentor other women.

To demonstrate open and collaborative models by working in complementary ways with other church organizations.

Revised 10/17/04

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The Adventist Woman

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Association of Adventist Women
PO Box 25025
Seattle, WA 98165-1925

Fax: 206-542-8886

Email: vkwiram@aaw.cc

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