

SYNOPSIS :

TRACES

An AIDS epidemic on a scale unknown anywhere else in the world is devastating Swaziland.

Figures released that 42.6 per cent of the adult population is infected with either HIV or AIDS. For Swazis aged between 25 and 29, the figure is 56 per cent. No other country has infection rates as high as this. With a population of one million, the very survival of the nation is at stake. Across the region, AIDS has reduced life expectancy to levels not seen since the 1800's. By 2010, experts predict, it will be 30 and Swaziland will be the first country to die from AIDS. Prostitution and child abuse are booming, traditions are lost, households are left to decadence, roofs collapse in what was once the central fire spot that kept the family warm and united. To disclose that they are dying of the epidemic is a shame and all they can do is tell they are dying from "the long illness". Tradition, such as polygamy, makes Swazi society uniquely vulnerable.

Incessant cough is killing, rural areas evoke emptiness, abandoned villages exude presence of human beings who passed away from AIDS, graves grow like bushes in the dry landscape. Crops and cotton fields are left unheld.

With their significant endurance, an army of orphans is left to fight against extinction on a territory where death of population, villages that disappear and voices that no longer convey the history of their families result in a broken landscape.

Swaziland – 2005

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