

EDITORIAL COMMENT

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## Aids figures a shocking reflection on government

**A** HUMAN Sciences Research Council survey conducted in 2008 has revealed the extent of the impact of the HIV/Aids pandemic on this country and especially its children. The frightening reality is that there are more than three million orphans in South Africa, 23% of whom are in the Eastern Cape, a province characterised by high levels of poverty and unemployment with Nelson Mandela Bay, for example, having 107 239 households out of 289 000 classified as indigent.

It is not difficult to point to the reasons for this situation.

Migrant labour destroyed families and continues to do so because of the attraction of jobs on the mines; the former homelands remain underdeveloped marked by poverty, hunger and deprivation; and the years of denialism and the absence of the kind of unequivocal leadership in the fight against HIV in government. To that should be added the observation of Love-life group director of programmes Judy-Marie Smith who notes that "tolerance of risk" increases among those who are marginalised and have fewer life prospects.

Smith's statement is particularly salient as it points firmly to the link between the inci-

dence of HIV/Aids on the one hand, and poverty and lack of opportunity on the other, and suggests that in addition to continuing the campaign against the disease the fight against poverty and unemployment is equally important and raises the question of whether government's priorities are where they should be.

We believe if the government was determined to win the war on poverty and HIV/Aids then every cent should be dedicated to this cause and that the toughest austerity measures imaginable should be put in place at all three spheres of government and that the profligacy so often evident in the lavish lifestyles of our leaders should be halted.

In addition, a culture of service should be required from public representatives – often sorely lacking. It cannot be right that in a country ravaged by the pandemic and with such high levels of poverty that Communications Minister Sipiwe Nyanda, for example, should spend thousands of rands on accommodation at luxury hotels or that cabinet ministers should add "extras" to their official vehicles at huge expense.

The survey is a frightening indictment of the failure of our government to address this crisis and it is a reflection of one that has clearly abandoned its stated commitment to create a caring society.

## Bulls match a symbol of unity

**THE** scenes at the Orlando Stadium in Soweto on Saturday when the Blue Bulls defeated the Crusaders in the semi-final of the Super 14 competition brought back memories of that day in 1995 when President Nelson Mandela, clad in a number 6 Springbok jersey, lifted the William Webb Ellis trophy at the end of the Rugby World Cup.

The fact that black and white could join together both inside and outside the stadium demonstrated that at a time when race relations are often fractious and insensitive sport can be a unifier and that a considerable reservoir of goodwill exists between ordinary people keen to see South African teams triumph on

the sports field.

It was an example of what this country can and should be and, hopefully, a lesson for those politicians more concerned with personal popularity than the overall good of the country.

While rugby teams would obviously prefer to be playing within their own "fortress", it would be positive if more fixtures were scheduled for venues like the Orlando Stadium – not as some form of sports "bussing" but because of the interaction that it generates. We need to get to know one another better and experience life through other eyes and there can be no better terrain for this to happen than at sporting events.