



The Blue Roof Life Space

The Blue Roof in Wentworth, South of Durban, was originally a notorious nightclub. In 2005 the space was reinvented for good when Alicia Keys and Keep a Child Alive (KCA) turned it into a wellness centre for comprehensive HIV treatment. It was under this mandate that it provided HIV services and support to thousands of people.

Since then, Blue Roof has gained many partners including the Stephen Lewis Foundation. It has become a symbol of sustainable upliftment, a place of healing.

When strict COVID-19 lockdowns had immediate and dangerous impacts for communities in Durban, South Africa, Blue Roof Life Space knew they had to take their vital youth-focused HIV programming online. “Everything happened so fast,” remembers Hombisa Ntsikanye from Blue Roof. “Everything was a shock, in our work and also the country as a whole.” With funding from the SLF, Blue Roof fast-tracked a pilot for a digital platform: **Talk, Test, Treat**. People can access age-appropriate and reliable advice on mobile phones, at home or from internet cafes, get a self-screening kit, watch how-to videos, and link to treatment and counselling through a coordinated referral system. Blue Roof is finding new ways to help young people overcome barriers, take control of their futures, and build thriving communities, because the worst HIV status to have is ‘unknown.’

Find out more about this by checking out these two links:

December 2021, CBC’s The Current talks about the impact of Covid with Hombisa Ntsikanye, an implementer and developer of the HIV and AIDS program at Blue Roof Life Space in Durban, South Africa; and Mitchell Warren, executive director of the AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition.

<https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-63-the-current/clip/15881848-how-covid-19-pandemic-affected-fight-hiv-aids>

Be impressed by **Talk Test Treat**, a program Blue Roof Life Space created when Covid-19 prevented from going door-to-door around their communities helping young people test for and deal with HIV and AIDS:

<https://vimeo.com/569815294>

In South Africa, home to one of the highest HIV prevalence rates in the world, community-led organizations like Blue Roof are the heartbeat behind life-saving HIV interventions for young people and their families, as well as builders of community in a broader sense. Six thousand people take part in their multi-disciplinary programming each year, and more than 200 young people living with HIV rely on their youth-friendly in-person clinics. And while South Africa is seeing a gradual decline in HIV transmission rates overall, young people are acquiring the virus at an alarming rate, especially adolescent girls. Finding, testing, and linking young people to treatment from a distance hit peak urgency during lockdowns.

“At Blue Roof Life Space, we love to work together with like-minded people and organisations to achieve a holistic youth space. This approach benefits our youth participants immensely, offering them a valuable over-arching service, from healthcare to career guidance, learnerships and entrepreneurial opportunities, to creative dance, sport and other much-needed afterschool programmes.”

Information from the SLF’s [Intersecting Pandemics: 2021/22 Year i Review](#) and [Blue Roof Life Space website](#)

Photo from FB: <https://www.facebook.com/bluerooflifespace/>

