

Managing the Impact of HIV/AIDS in Education in KwaZulu Natal

**A Presentation to the
National Teacher's Union
Advocacy Conference on HIV/AIDS**

Peter Badcock-Walters

Health Economics & AIDS Research Division (HEARD), UND

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Key Presentation Points

- HIV/AIDS is a development issue and the largest single management challenge facing education; it will directly or indirectly impact almost every aspect of management, teaching and learning for a *very* long time to come.
- HIV/AIDS may appear to be a new issue but its impact will be to explode the scale of *existing* problems by increasing service ratios and attrition rates and reducing contact time, quality and output.
- Education cannot produce a medical solution but *can* help manage the problem by converting schools from high to low risk environments, in which behaviour change and choice can be addressed and properly communicated.
- We have to empower managers to move beyond fear and uncertainty and develop practical systemic responses which can be implemented at *all* levels, in terms they are familiar with.
- It *is* possible to design policy and practical counter-measures to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS. We *can* reduce its impact.

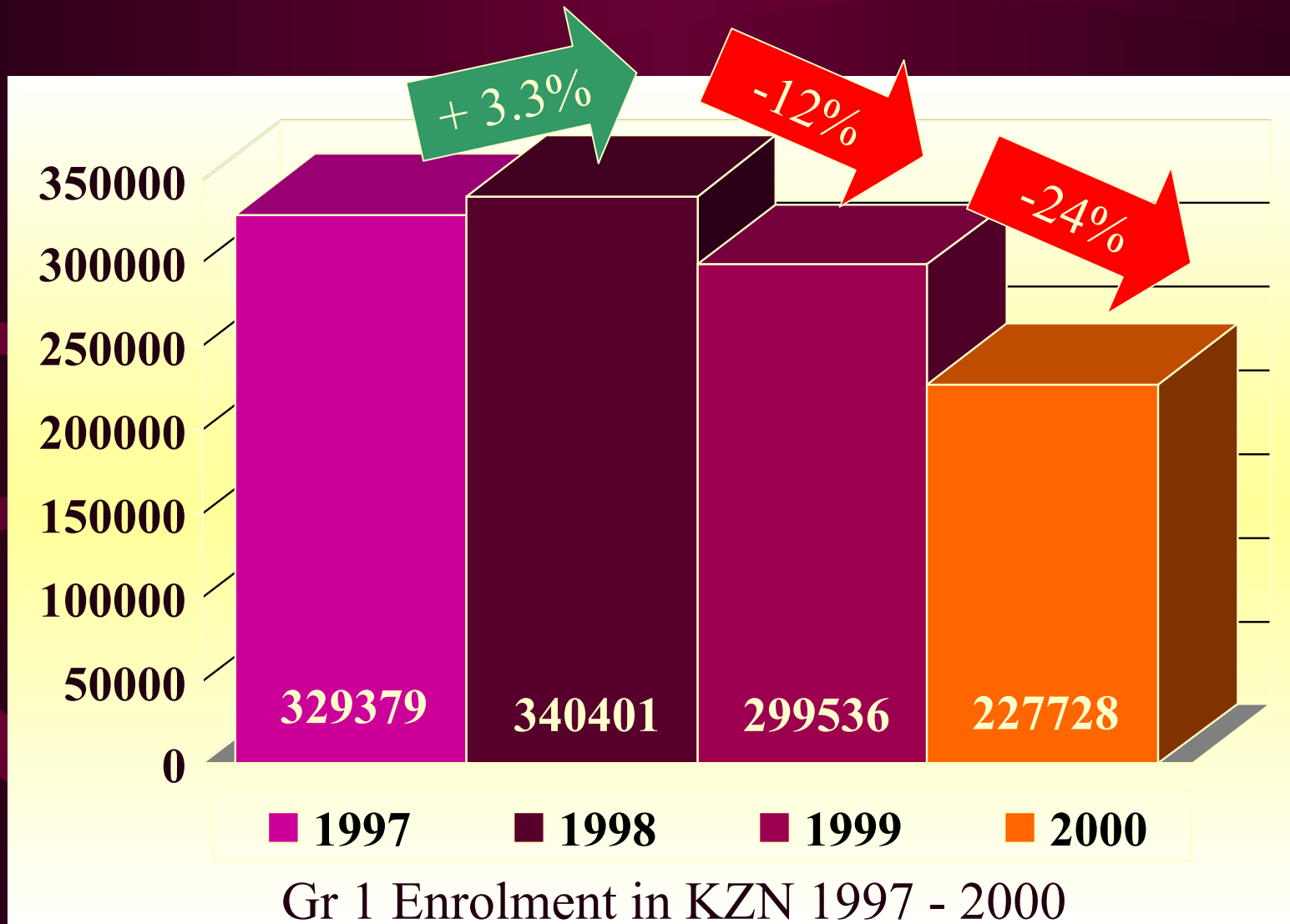
Management Issue 1: Impact on Labour

1. **Temporary Educator Loss:** Increased health costs and absenteeism, reduced contact time, performance and quality, time lost to funerals and family trauma and system failure.
2. **Educator Attrition:** Permanent loss through death, relocation, job change, retirement or chronic illness caused loss of 5 300 educators in 1999, or 6,7% of KZN stock, leading to loss of experience and decline in quality. Percentage AIDS impact uncertain but growing through high educator prevalence (up to 70% higher than general population).
3. **Educator Training:** Demand for new educator stock growing in spite of shrinking enrolment, with financial and institutional implications, and prospect of high prevalence rates in students increasing this number.
4. **Specialist Educator Losses:** Limited stocks of specialist math, science and other educators lost at same rate and also increasingly poached by private sector under similar attrition pressures.
5. **Rationalization Planning:** Difficulty in planning when stocks are being randomly depleted in all areas.
6. **Management Attrition:** Much smaller stocks of managers at all levels are equally vulnerable with dire consequences for administration.

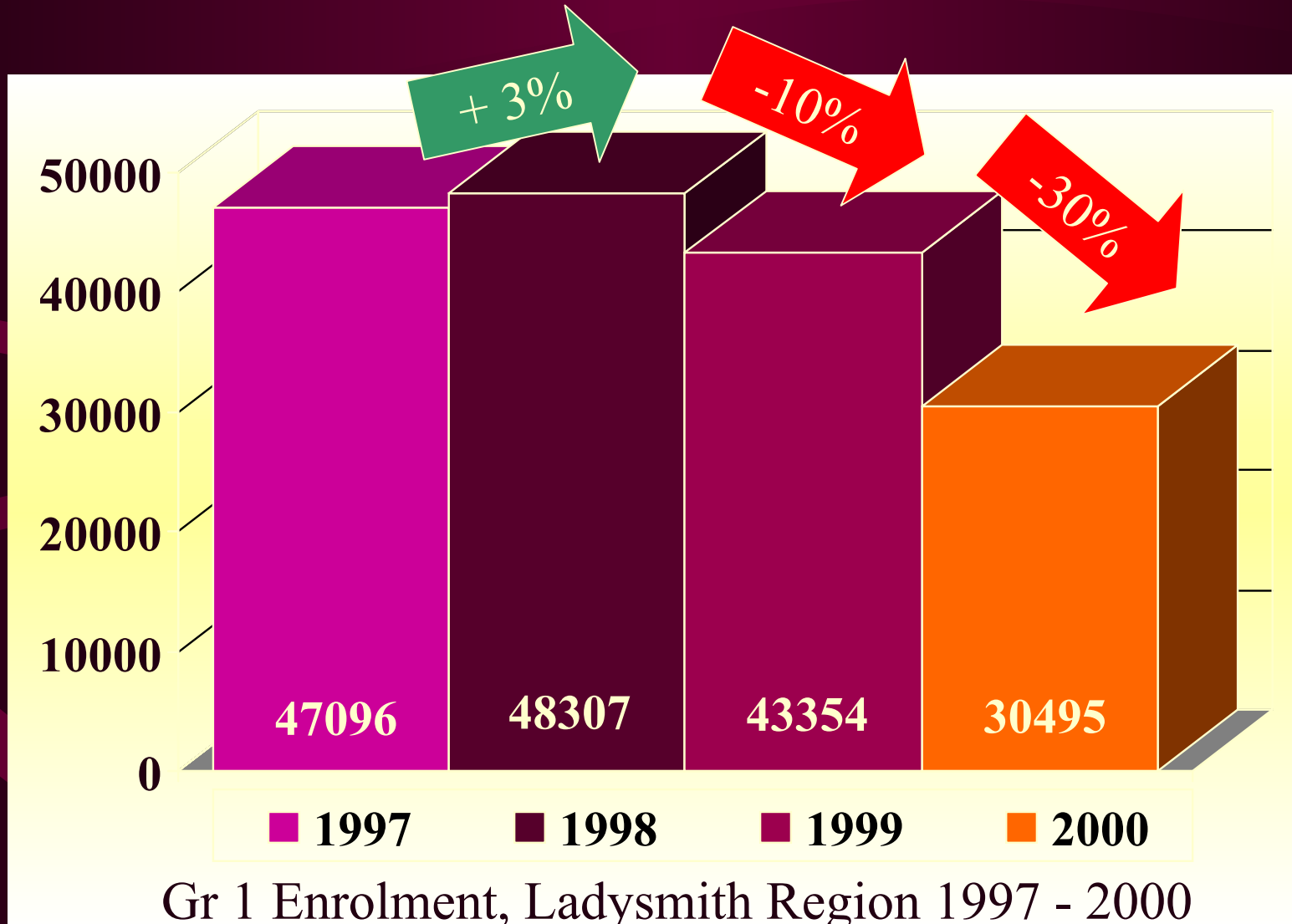
Management Issue 2: Impact on Enrolment

- 1. Enrolment Decline:** *Growth* in enrolment has been declining steadily since the 1980s, and has run at about +3% through the 1990s. This may be attributed to reducing fertility rates, normalization of age/grade and system dynamics, for example.
- 2. Decline in 1999/2000 in Grade 1:** Growth turned to a 12% decline in 1999 and a 24% decline in 2000 for KZN (Snap Survey data). While 2000 saw the Age 7 policy impact, it is hard to explain the drop in 1999 or the full extent of it in 2000, other than to attribute *some* of it to HIV/AIDS infant mortality, HIV-reduced fertility, orphaning, home/ sick care duties, etc. Data for 2001 suggests an increase of 18% in Grade 1 enrolment, but this still 12 % short of the increase required to offset the 2000 drop and equates to a *further* 12% decline in real terms.
- 3. Increasing Attrition:** Drop-out and transition rates are deteriorating and the incidence of orphans is growing dramatically; the number of matriculants will also drop as will qualification for tertiary entrance.
- 4. Learner/Educator Ratios:** These are unlikely to improve since educator attrition will keep these ratios and class sizes high.
- 5. Small/Farm Schools:** As enrolment declines many small and farm schools may cease to be viable.

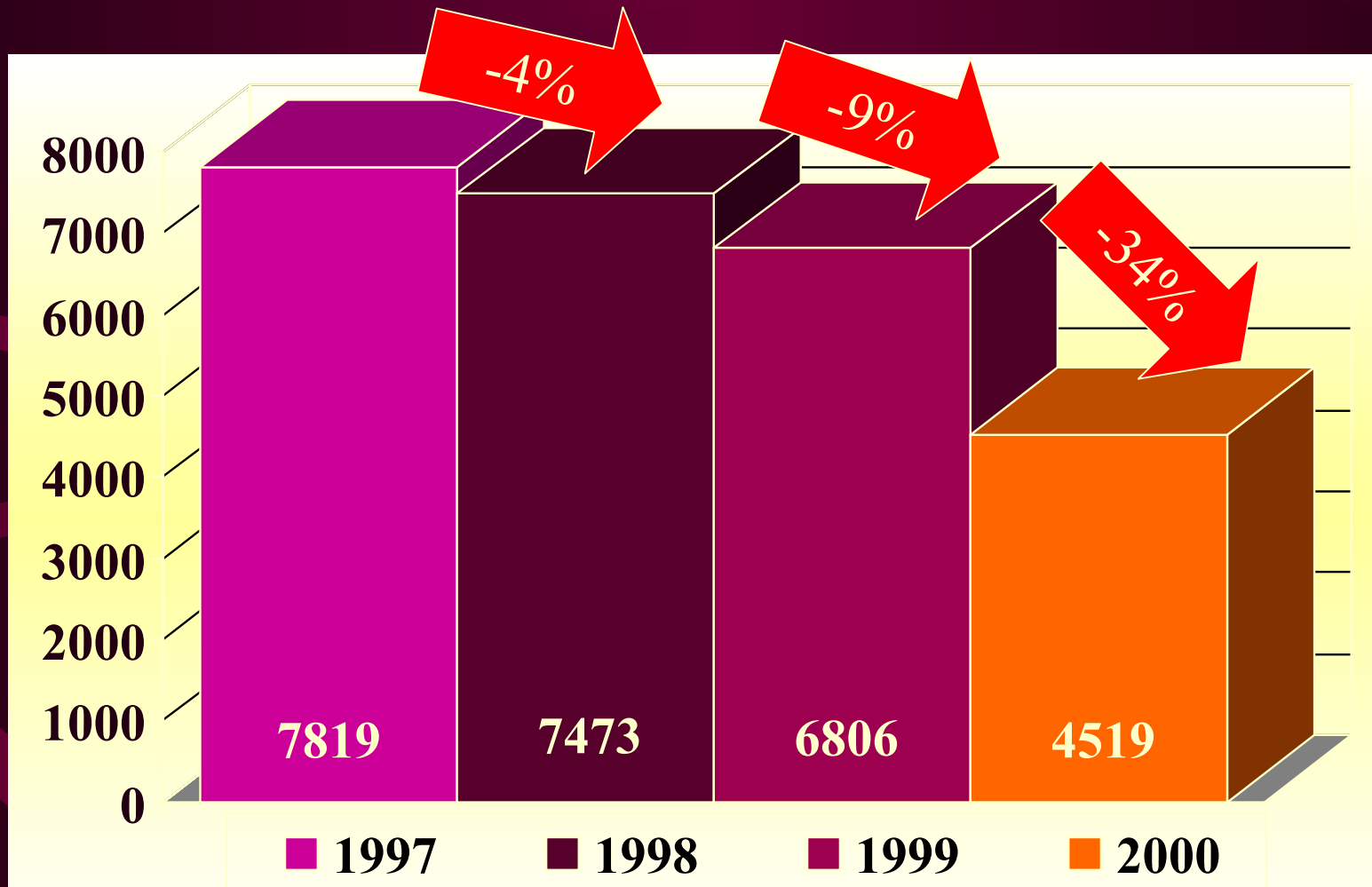
Declining Grade 1 Enrolment:



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Gr 1 Enrolment, KwaMashu District 1997 - 2000

Management Issue 3: Gender Equity

1. **Reversal of Trends:** Comparative experience in sub-Saharan Africa suggests that female learners are at far greater risk than males.
2. **Population in SA:** The male/female split in the population is close to 50/50; in theory this should be reflected in the Grade 1 enrolment, but in fact is not: In 1997, 52% of Grade 1 enrolment was male.
3. **Reducing Female Enrolment?:** In 1998 there was a growth of 3% in the Grade 1 enrolment of males versus 4% growth for females. By 1999, this had reversed to a *decline* of 12% for males and 13% for females, and by 2000, female enrolment had declined by a further 26% versus 22% for males.
4. **District Patterns:** This pattern is reflected in most KZN districts, and while the differential is still limited, the trend *is* towards greater impact on female learners. By 2000, 53% of Grade 1 was male.
5. **Female Vulnerability:** Females, even at age 7, are likely to be more required than males to help in the home, nurse sick parents and siblings, care for younger siblings, and may be the first to be removed from school when fees cannot be paid. They are also more likely than boys to suffer sexual abuse and personal trauma.

Management Issue 4: Growth in Number of Orphans

1. **Incidence:** In normal circumstances, orphans do not constitute a significant proportion of the child population.
2. **AIDS Orphans:** Orphans are defined as children under 15 losing one or both parents. Based on calculations and projections of AIDS deaths, the estimated number of orphans in South Africa by 2010 will be around 2 million. Of this number, 500 000 will be found in KZN.
3. **Impact on Education:** This suggests that up to 1 in 5 of children in school, or of school age, could be orphans. The scale of this tragedy is unprecedented in the experience of the system, and implies that it will constitute a key management problem in its own right.
4. **Declining Enrolment, Drop-Out and Fees:** Orphaning can be expected to increase drop-out rates and reduce transition, due to lack of family support structure, inability to pay fees, need to care for family and siblings in child-headed households, and inability to deal with personal and family trauma and tragedy.
5. **Social Instability:** Large numbers of children out of school suggests the potential for growing social instability and long-term unemployment.

Management Issue 5: Decline in School Fees

- 1. Payment of School Fees:** The rates of prevalence, orphaning and anecdotal evidence of increased funeral attendance and sick leave confirm that communities are indeed being impacted. This means the diversion of scarce resources to funerals, health care and extended family support, and a reduced ability to pay school fees.
- 2. Incidence:** There is no hard data available as yet, but reports from many districts talk of “destitute schools” unable to collect school fees. A key management task would be to collect data on this trend and project its likely impact on resourcing, by district and region.
- 3. Support:** The extent of the problem means that many families are equally affected and that there is limited capacity to extend traditional support to other extended family members.
- 4. Policy Response:** This management problem will require some well considered response, since learners cannot be legally turned away and will require the weight and support of the State to keep them enrolled. This must be translated into a practical and implementable policy response.

Management Issue 6: Transition Rates and Matriculation

1. **Primary/Secondary Transition Rates:** The dynamics already described confirm that over time there will be reduced flow into the secondary sector. This will be caused by reduced primary enrolment and increasing drop-out rates, reduced quality due to increased educator absenteeism/less contact hours and growing learner absenteeism, ill health and trauma.
2. **Matriculation Rates:** There may be reduced numbers of candidates even before the observed decline in enrolment flows through the system, and reduces both the quality and quantity of matriculants available to enter the tertiary sector.
3. **Gender Bias:** This decline is almost certain to reflect a reducing proportion of females.
4. **Specialist/Rare Subject Pass:** This quantitative and qualitative decline will affect all learners fairly equally and therefore reduce even further the real number of matriculants with math and science, for example.

HIV/AIDS is a development problem that has particular significance for the education sector, which enrolls or employs almost almost one-third of South Africa's population and consumes almost a quarter of the national budget.

The key challenge is to find ways to manage the situation, and turn what is now a high risk school environment into an effective instrument to combat ignorance and motivate sustainable behaviour change.

Management Response

- 1. Recognize the Problem:** Recognize the significance of the HIV/AIDS issue as the most significant single management problem facing the system, and communicate this internally from the highest level.
- 2. Review Policy and Regulation:** South Africa has an excellent overarching national policy but the problem of disseminating and implementing it remains a challenge. KZNDEC should consider a detailed review of its provincial policies and regulations to identify and change those items that are in conflict with effective response.
- 3. Issues of Concern:** The kind of issues that should be considered include accountable administration, implementable code of conduct, appropriate disciplinary measures, educator location and training, increased local authority to deal with unique situations and so on.
- 4. Empowerment:** Ensure managers do what they are trained to do by effectively, systemically and accountably administering their areas, and creating an environment in which life skills and personal choice can be taught. This should include empowering them to find creative solutions to new problems.

Management Response

5. **Data Capture:** Develop the means to capture supplementary indicators to monitor and record the progress of the pandemic in respect of key education issues. This might involve the monthly local capture of 6 to 8 indicators for district use and analysis, to inform monthly meetings and decision making and provide reporting back to the school and upwards to the region and province, including finance.
6. **Multi-Sectoral Partnerships:** As a development problem, this requires operational partnerships with health, welfare and the donor/ NGO sectors at least. This should involve the development of a shared agenda and prioritization protocols, and the networking of materials and resources.
7. **Resource Centers:** The development of a network of resource centers strategically placed to facilitate materials distribution, laboratory and library access and educator support, already agreed as a KZN priority, should be seen as sites for counseling, materials supply, orphan drop-in/child care, family and reproductive health and training. These should be seen as multi-sectoral centers.

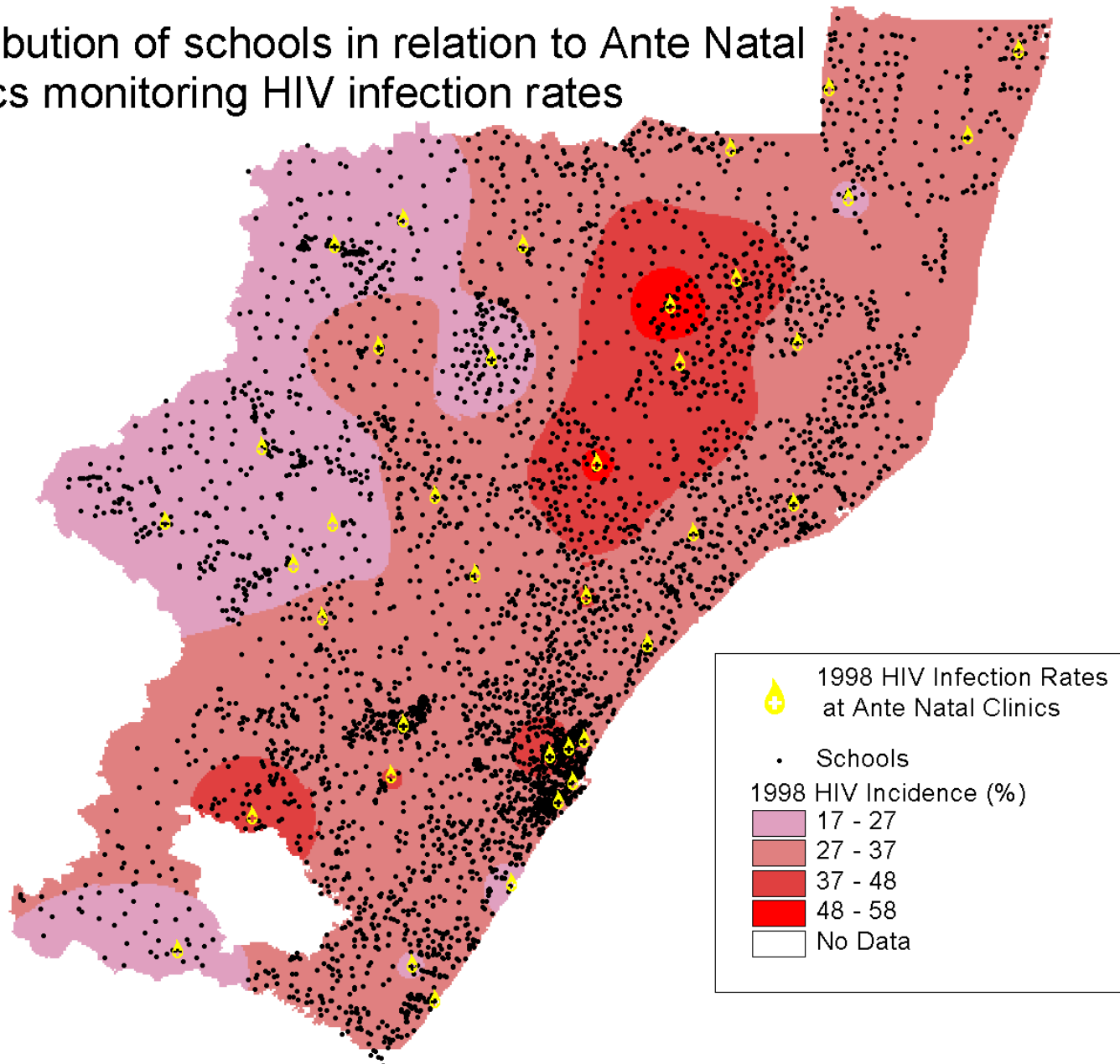
Management Response

8. **School Governing Bodies:** Recognize the importance of these bodies as an interface with the community on a range of complex issues, such as fees, ostracization (of learners and educators), volunteer support , multi-grading and small school viability, and engage them in counter-measures. This could involve joint-planning and harnessing local capacity to support orphan care etc.
9. **Orphans:** Address the scale of this problem through purpose made approaches, in association with the NDE and other departments. Design means of continuing education/vocational training, flexi-time schooling, mentoring and other creative approaches to support.
10. **Educator Training:** Recognize that declining enrolments do not equate to declining demand for educators and guide appropriate training agendas and curricula to meet dynamic demand needs.
11. **Counseling:** It is impossible to over-emphasize the growing importance of counseling services for learners and educators exposed to unprecedented levels of personal trauma and grief. This implies widespread availability at the school level and may suggest training and partnerships with NGO and private sector interests.

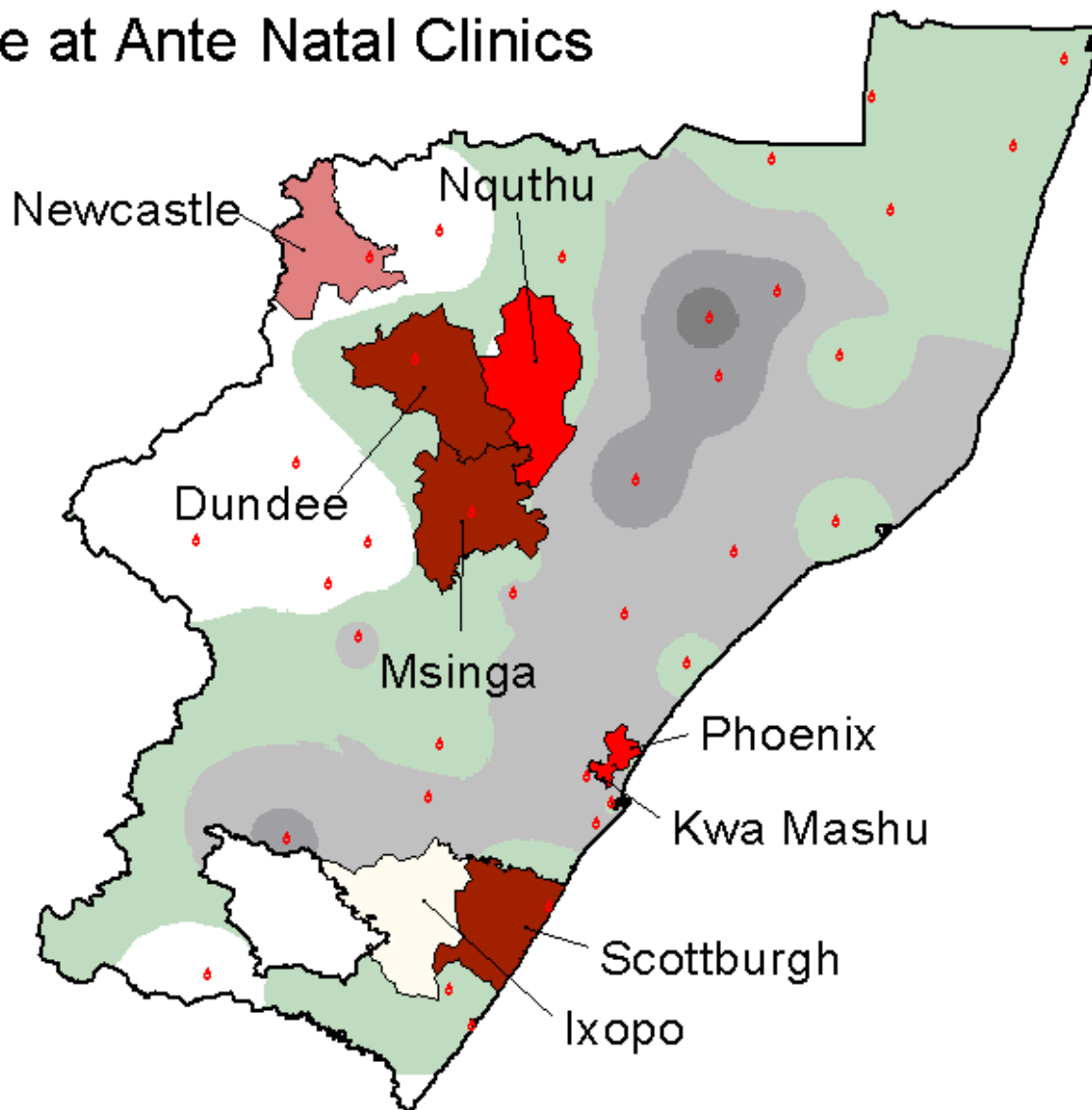
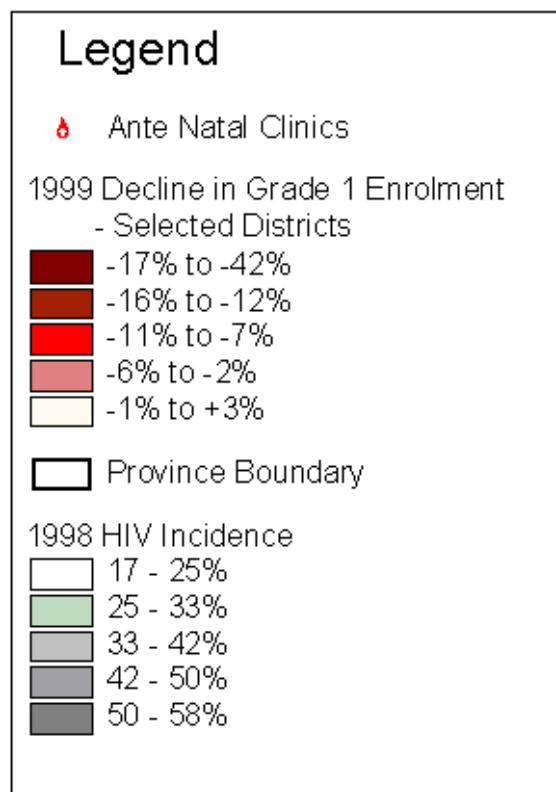
Management Response

12. **Curriculum Change:** Research and support the development of educational and other materials, from various sectors, to enrich and modify the curriculum, promote choice and sustainable behaviour change. This should include the introduction of family and reproductive health learning from the earliest age, where possible, but always in association with community and family interests.
13. **Marginalization:** Policy or procedure must be considered to deal with the marginalization/ostracization of learners and educators in the school and wider community, and expert opinion sought.
14. **Information:** It is important that information about this management crisis be locally, regionally and internationally available, to share experience and inform co-operative response.
15. **Strategic Planning:** Consider the establishment of a dedicated task team to inform and guide KZNDEC strategy and decision making and maintain contact with other sectoral partners. This should be primarily informed by the collection of district indicators and develop an early warning system for provincial (and national) education.

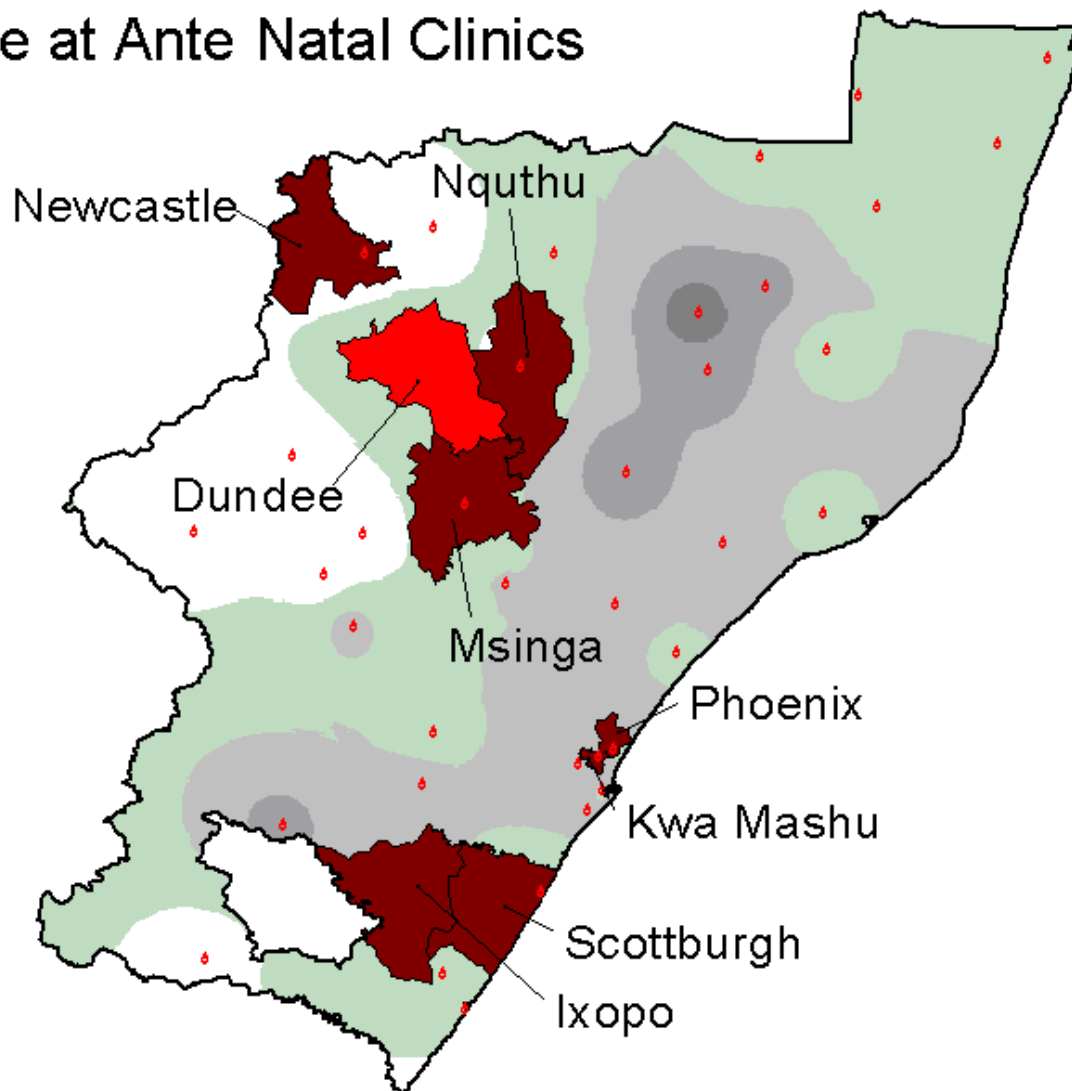
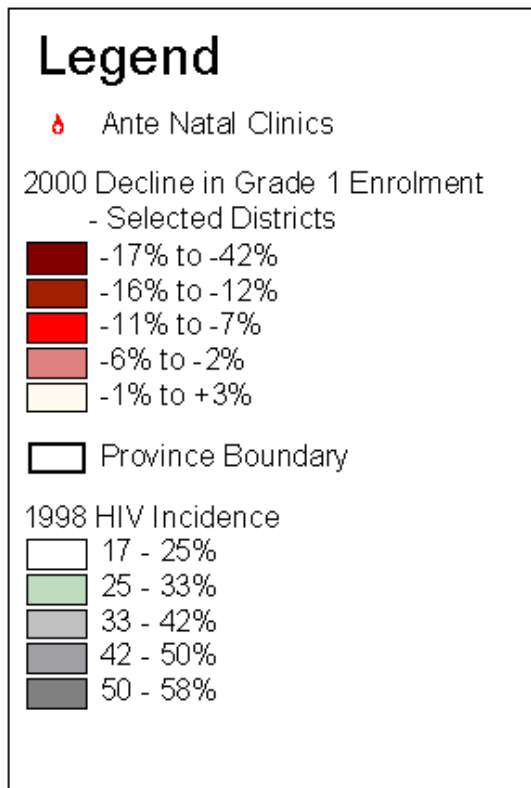
Distribution of schools in relation to Ante Natal Clinics monitoring HIV infection rates



1999 Decline in Enrolment in selected districts in relation to 1998 HIV prevalence at Ante Natal Clinics



2000 Decline in Enrolment in selected districts in relation to 1998 HIV prevalence at Ante Natal Clinics



Summary

1. The education system is particularly vulnerable due to associated social instability, comparatively dysfunctional operation at some levels, high attrition, repetition and drop-out rates and the continuing problem of over-aged enrollment and high levels of infection in educators.
2. These factors combine to create an environment in which limited numbers of system managers and often under-qualified, under-resourced and dangerously exposed educators wrestle with large numbers of disparately aged learners, whose home lives are all too often touched by poverty, violence and social turbulence.
3. The extent of HIV/AIDS impact on the education sector is clouded by the lack of hard data on prevalence rates in the staff and classroom and a lack of appreciation of the enormity of the problem and consequently, an absence of planning for practical counter-measures.
4. The existing levels of infection make education a high-risk breeding ground for infection rather than a pre-employment area of containment.
5. Yet the education system remains the most logical and important ground on which to engage and counter the spread of the pandemic; nowhere else, from the cradle to the grave, does such an opportunity exist to counter the attitudinal and physical threat of the disease. We must seize it.

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Thank You for Your Attention