

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Special theme song presented by Prudence Katoneni-Mbofana
- Community Village displays highlight the extensive work
- Poster presentations highlight 'home-grown' research and programmes on HIV and PMTCT

KEY QUOTES

"The role of men in society is unquestionable. It is for this reason that men should take their place in the HIV response, both for their own health as well as in support of women and children . . . and it is not just treatment, but also a fact of discipline."

- President R.G. Mugabe

President opens Second National AIDS Conference

By Clarence Mandemutsa and Mwavi Kachale, Key Correspondent Team

The Zimbabwe National HIV and AIDS Conference which was officially opened by His Excellency, President Robert Mugabe, kicked off on September 5th and will run till September 8th, 2011. The theme of the conference is 'Eliminate new HIV infections in children, Keep mothers alive.'

The President said the conference was a "timely and necessary intervention" in the ongoing responses to the challenges of HIV and AIDS. Around 15 000 children are infected by HIV every year in Zimbabwe mainly through vertical transmission. "This is a

global injustice that can be prevented," the President noted. "The theme should galvanize the response of having an HIV-free generation by 2015 and keep the mothers and



President Robert Mugabe, the theme of the conference is 'Eliminate new HIV infections in children, Keep mothers alive.'

"I am aware that the women may be suffering more than men. It is they that naturally pass it on to the children, yet they get it from men," the President said.

Men have not taken their place in the response to HIV and AIDS

as indicated by the fact that fewer men are on treatment as compared to women, the President stated.

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ART Programme: Successes and Challenges

By Godsway Shumba and Mwavi Kachale, Key Correspondent Team

Zimbabwe has made progress in scaling up antiretroviral therapy (ART) since the programme was introduced in 2004. In a presentation by Dr. Tsitsi Mutasa

-Apollo, Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, it was highlighted that in 2004, there were only five ART initiating and follow-up sites but by 2007, they had increased to 150. "This number further increased to 509 sites in all the districts of Zimbabwe by 2010," said Dr Mutasa-Apollo.

By end of 2010, around 360 000 people living with HIV (PHIV) were receiving ART services out of an estimated 600 000 PLHIV in need of treatment, said Mutasa-Apollo. Uptake of paediatric ART also remains slow. Of the 80 000 children who need treatment, only 23 000 are





Mock graveyard by Africaid

- “Behavior change facilitators are the unsung heroes”



Mock Graveyard for Children who Died of AIDS

By Wallace Mawire, Key Correspondent Team

Africaid, an NGO in Harare has mounted a mock graveyard at Zimbabwe's national HIV and AIDS conference to symbolize three percent of 10 872 children who died from HIV related illnesses in 2010 in Zimbabwe. The mock graveyard is part of the Community Village exhibitions being showcased to the public at the Zimbabwe National HIV and AIDS conference held in

Harare on

The graveyard bearing hundreds of plaques with names of deceased children who died of AIDS has become an instant crowd puller, also serving as a reminder to visitors on the prevalence of the disease.

Elizabeth Gwenzi, a Counselor with Africaid, said that their initiative is serving as a reminder of the reality of the disease and also helping to educate children on the

dangers of HIV and AIDS.

“The idea of this mock graveyard is a call from HIV positive children to stop new HIV infections in children and to make PMTCT happen,” Gwenzi says.

People attending the conference have been called on to write the names of their beloved ones as epitaphs on the mock graves as part of their remembrance strategy.

Task shifting effective in resource constrained

By Clarence Mademutsa, Key Correspondent Team

In recent times, Zimbabwe suffered from high turnover in the health sector with many seasoned professionals leaving the country for “greener pastures”. Rural communities have been the most hard hit by this development. Funding for healthcare initiatives has declined over the past decade.

The Behaviour Change Programme Manager of the National AIDS Council (NAC), Mr Oscar Munda said it was time to adopt community formulated strategies to curb the strains brought about by the shortages of both health personnel and availability of funding. He said local communities have

responsibility over their own

health. Mr Munda said Zimbabwe's model for community engagement in behaviour change is an effective tool in improving people's health in a resource constrained environment. He noted that approach is not the “magic bullet”, but the successes of the programme reflect the importance of community involvement in”

President Mugabe warns on complacency

By Wallace Mawire, Key Correspondent Team

President Robert Mugabe has warned the population not to be complacent in believing that they have won the fight against HIV and AIDS. The President made the remark at the official opening of Zimbabwe's second national HIV and AIDS

conference in Harare today. He said that although HIV prevalence and incidence is on the decline in Zimbabwe, the percentages are still unacceptably high for the relatively small population in the country. “We should therefore not be complacent. Letting our guard down could

easily lead to the reversal of the gains made in the last three decades of the fight against HIV and AIDS,” President Mugabe said.

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