

Eliminating new HIV infections in children

Keeping Young Mothers Alive

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Ongoing exhibitions and displays at community village
- Live Mai Chishamba Show filmed onsite
- Keynote address by EGPAF Global PMTCT Director

KEY QUOTES:

“Men are important partners, not just in making the baby but in planning for programmes” - Dr Agnes Mahomva, EGPAF Country Director

Men urged to take more central role in PMTCT

By Mwavi Kachale, Key Correspondent Team

The role of men in prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT) programmes has been described as vital in ensuring the successful implementation of planned projects. It has been discovered that mother to child transmission (MTCT) is the second most common mode of HIV transmission and men can play a significant role in reducing such transmission, according to Dr Mary Keiffer, the Global Director of PMTCT services at the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation.

In her keynote address, Dr Keiffer shed light on studies carried out in Swaziland and Rwanda that showed that men took a working

interest in testing and training on effective PMTCT practices. She highlighted that the findings revealed vital developments in that



EGPAF Country Director -Dr Agnes Mahomva with Dr Mary Keiffer

men in the two societies which were viewed as largely patriarchal, embraced HIV training initiatives. Dr Keiffer said men in

Swaziland were willing to go through training for the sake of their babies and that in Rwanda some men had formed support groups that reached out to other men. She highlighted women face a burden and responsibility in both child bearing, and healthy nurturing, noting that women are twice as vulnerable to HIV as men.

She suggested extensive education of HIV positive women on safer breast feeding practices and routine child care.

Public-private health sector partnerships

By Clarence Mademutsa, Key Correspondent Team

The private health sector is lagging behind in the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) programmes in the country, said Diana Patel of the Organisation for Public Health Interventions and Development (OPHID) Trust.

Patel indicated that there is little knowledge on provision of services in the private health sector. The services offered by the private sector are not standardized and not nationally coordinated, she said.

She encouraged the development of more private-public partnerships in the health sector given

that Zimbabwe has a growing middle class that is likely utilize services in the private health sector.

Patel stressed that there is urgent need to actively engage the private health sector in the development of national PMTCT programmes.



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Community health worker exhibiting at the conference

“Only a sizeable number of youth have access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information” - Ashley Masvon’a

Community Health Workers Commended

By Wallace Mawire, Key Correspondent Team

Zimbabwe's community based volunteers fighting to help people living with and affected by HIV and AIDS have been commended for their contribution to help fight the disease.

According to Oscar Mundinda, National Behavioural Change Manager for the National AIDS Council (NAC) in Zimbabwe says that community based volunteers in Zimbabwe have played a great role in HIV and

AIDS awareness in the country's resource constrained environment.

The volunteers have been involved in the national HIV prevention programme in Zimbabwe. Mundinda says that in a resource constrained environment, motivated and supervised community based volunteers can be utilized for community based HIV prevention initiatives.

"In Zimbabwe's context of high literacy levels the quality of

communication provided by volunteers was considered satisfactory," says Mundinda.

There was high attrition of skilled health workers when the country launched its National Behaviour Change Strategy for 2006 to 2010, This created the challenge of managing HIV and AIDS programmes due to reduced human resource capacity and prolonged economic recession.

Youth bemoan limited involvement in HIV response

By Beatrice Savadye, Key Correspondent Team

Youth exhibiting at the ongoing Zimbabwe National HIV and AIDS Conference decried limited youth involvement in all facets of development including the health sector.

"There is limited youth participation and most of the times we are just involved at the implementation level yet we

need to be involved at the planning and decision making stage," said Ashley Masvon'a from Young People's Network on HIV and AIDS.

"Only a sizeable number of youth have access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and information on HIV and positive living, yet you find old people making decisions for us

and even representing young people in forums as if we are non-existent," Masvon'a said.

According to the UNAIDS, 4.9 million young people aged 15-24 living with HIV need information and services for pregnancy prevention & pregnancy care. The same report highlights that a further 569,000 women aged 10-24 are infected with HIV every year.

Mai Chisamba graces AIDS Conference

By Mwavi Kachale, Key Correspondent Team

Popular talk show presenter, Rebecca Chisamba, graced the National HIV and AIDS Conference on 6 September with a special recording of the programme 'Mai Chisamba Show' under the conference theme, 'Eliminate new HIV infections in children, keep mothers alive.'

The talk show presenter had a panel of experts from various spheres critical to effective HIV response, including the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare and the media. It was highlighted that media professionals have an important role to play in reaching neglected communities and that lack of communication had limited people's capacity to respond

positively to PMTCT programmes. The special edition of the talk show thrilled crowds at the conference and is set to be screened on national television.



Mai Chisamba and her panel