



For Immediate Release – 27 November 2008

World AIDS Day: Bold leadership needed to overcome 'disease of inequalities'

A deepening financial crisis emphasises the urgency of maintaining and strengthening the global response to HIV and AIDS, say AIDS activists from across civil society.

"Bold and visionary leaders have to step forward", says Allyson Leacock, chair of the World AIDS Campaign Global Steering Committee and executive director of the Caribbean Broadcast Media Partnership on HIV/AIDS. "Rather than taking a seemingly 'easy' route of diverting resources, we need leadership that sees that relaxing our response to AIDS now will worsen the inequalities that fuel the spread of HIV leading to even more deaths and a far more expensive response in the future."

Leadership in the response to AIDS and the protection of human rights is especially relevant during this 20th anniversary of World AIDS Day on 1 December and the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights on 10 December 2008.

Dr Peter Piot, the executive director of UNAIDS, has highlighted that AIDS is a "disease of inequalities" that continues to spread due to deep rooted societal injustices such as gender inequality, marginalisation and criminalisation of vulnerable groups.

"We need a new, bold approach that puts human rights at its core and ensures everyone has equal access to prevention, treatment, care and support", says Marcel van Soest, executive director of the World AIDS Campaign. "We have to turn our energy from shutting key populations out to opening our response fully to sex workers, men who have sex with men, people who use drugs, prisoners, migrants as well as children, youth and women."

"We need President-elect Obama's 'Yes We Can' approach to be applied to AIDS", says Deborah Williams, chair of the Board of the Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (GNP+). Noting that in the next few months new leadership will be in place in critical positions for the AIDS response including a new executive director for UNAIDS and new US Global AIDS coordinator, she stated, "We have witnessed bold and inclusive campaigning. We need that same leadership to end exclusionary practices in the US and other countries, dedicate sustainable resources to scale up treatment and other services, and involve all stakeholders in developing and implementing a truly effective global effort."

Over the past 27 years of the epidemic, notes van Soest, "We have learnt what works and what doesn't. And what works is when countries have realistic knowledge about the specific nature of the epidemic in their country, use donor money in the most efficient and constructive way and include key populations intensively, whilst engaging leadership at the highest level."

Mabel Bianco, president of FEIM and coordinator of the International AIDS Women's Caucus (IAWC), emphasises that without political leadership key groups such as women and girls are most likely to be left behind. "Women's subordination and gender stereotypes have devastating effects on women and girls, especially in developing countries because they fuel gender-based

**Representatives of the
World AIDS Campaign
Global Steering
Committee:**

Youth
TBC

Women
Mabel Bianco
International AIDS Women's
Caucus

**People living with
HIV/AIDS**
Deborah Williams
Global Network of People
Living with HIV/AIDS

Negaya Chorley
Acting representative
International Community of
Women Living with HIV/AIDS

NGOs
Nadine France
Health and Development
Networks

Media
Allyson Leacock
Global Media AIDS Initiative

Labour
Asif Altaf
Global Unions HIV/AIDS
Programme

Faith
Linda Hartke
Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance

Business
Patricia Mugambi Ndegwa
Global Business Coalition on
HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and
Malaria

Non-voting members:

Cheryl Bauerle
Joint United Nations
Programme on HIV and AIDS
(UNAIDS)

Mick Matthews/Katja Roll
Global Fund to Fight
HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and
Malaria

Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise.



**Representatives of the
World AIDS Campaign
Global Steering
Committee:**

Youth
TBC

Women
Mabel Bianco
International AIDS Women's
Caucus

**People living with
HIV/AIDS**
Deborah Williams
Global Network of People
Living with HIV/AIDS

Negaya Chorley
Acting representative
International Community of
Women Living with HIV/AIDS

NGOs
Nadine France
Health and Development
Networks

Media
Allyson Leacock
Global Media AIDS Initiative

Labour
Asif Altaf
Global Unions HIV/AIDS
Programme

Faith
Linda Hartke
Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance

Business
Patricia Mugambi Ndegwa
Global Business Coalition on
HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and
Malaria

Non-voting members:

Cheryl Bauerle
Joint United Nations
Programme on HIV and AIDS
(UNAIDS)

Mick Matthews/Katja Roll
Global Fund to Fight
HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and
Malaria

violence, restrict women's sexual and reproductive rights, thus making women and girls more vulnerable to HIV infection", she warns. "We need to recognise the need of public policies to address violence against women and HIV and AIDS. Donors and developed countries need to allocate funds to address those two pandemics."

Leaders in all sectors are called to actively respond. "God calls us to speak for the voices that cannot be heard, and now more than ever the voice of faith leaders ought to be heard", states Rev. Annie Kaseketi, trainer and mentor with World Vision's Church Partnership on Gender Development in the Africa Region. "We cannot afford to leave our interventions at VCT [voluntary counselling and testing], support and care. We are being called to extend our response to complete restoration."

"We are committing ourselves as trade unionists to take on that same personal leadership role and work for help and justice for all those affected", says Asif Altaf, HIV/AIDS Coordinator for the International Transport Workers Federation. "We will once again redouble our efforts to achieve agreements that ensure that no HIV positive worker is discriminated against in his or her place of work, and that each and every one can get the access to the ARVs that they need."

Concludes Leacock, "Our leadership must have the courage to change the conversation about the persistent stigma and discrimination that continue to thwart our efforts to empower us as a global community to treat all people including people living with HIV with love and respect."

Further information for editors

World AIDS Day 2008 Events Calendar: a continually updated list of local and national events all over the globe: <http://www.worldaidscampaign.org/en/Key-events/World-AIDS-Day/World-AIDS-Day-2008/WAD-2008-Events-Calendar>

A media fact sheet for World AIDS Day and other media resources are posted at: <http://www.worldaidscampaign.org/en/Media/Media-for-World-AIDS-Day>

The official poster images and versions used around the world can be downloaded from: <http://www.worldaidscampaign.org/en/Key-events/World-AIDS-Day>

For the most recent comprehensive statistics on HIV and AIDS, see the *2008 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic*, published by UNAIDS: http://www.unaids.org/en/KnowledgeCentre/HIVData/GlobalReport/2008/2008_Global_report.asp

For more information about the youth events happening in India and other parts of the world around World AIDS Day, please visit: www.indiaaidscampaign.org

world *aids*
campaign



The World AIDS Campaign, with support of its Global Steering Committee networks, selects the international theme for World AIDS Day each year. "Leadership" under the slogan "Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise" is the theme for the 2008 World AIDS Day.

The World AIDS Campaign supports, strengthens and connects campaigns that hold leaders accountable for their promises on HIV and AIDS.
www.worldaidscampaign.org

For more information or for interviews with experts, national campaigners and people directly affected by HIV and AIDS, contact the World AIDS Campaign at media@worldaidscampaign.org, +31 20 616 9045 (Netherlands) or +44 7821 860 723 (UK mobile).

Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise.