

PRESS RELEASE

African First Ladies unite to ensure that all children are born HIV-free

The First Ladies of Africa call on governments and communities to ensure that all babies in Africa are born and stay free of HIV.

GENEVA, 26 November 2014—Ahead of World AIDS Day 2014, the Organisation of African First Ladies Against HIV/AIDS (OAFLA) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) have launched a campaign to stop new HIV infections among children and ensure that their mothers stay healthy. The campaign was launched in association with the African Broadcast Media Partnership.

“Many countries are giving us hope that we can end the AIDS epidemic on the African continent and around the world,” said the First Lady of the Republic of Chad and President of OAFLA, Hinda Deby Itno. “We must continue to intensify our efforts, as too many children in Africa are born with HIV every day. The prosperity of our continent depends on a healthy generation.”

In recent years, country-led movements in sub-Saharan Africa have resulted in a significant decrease in new HIV infections among children. An estimated 210 000 children in sub-Saharan Africa were newly infected with HIV in 2013 compared to 370 000 in 2009, a decline of 43%.

Coverage of services to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV in the region reached 68%, up from 56% in 2011. Despite this progress, there is still a need to strengthen community-led HIV responses in order to ensure universal access to life-saving medicines for both mothers and their children, as in 2013 only 22% of children had access to the medicines.

“The First Ladies of Africa have started a powerful movement to ensure that no more babies are born with HIV in Africa,” said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS. “We must fast-track our efforts to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030. There is no greater return than investing in the health and development of a nation.”

The First Ladies’ broadcast and social media campaign reinforces the need for strong leadership, shared responsibility and concerted community action to stop new HIV infections among children. The First Ladies’ call for active community involvement, including women living with HIV and their partners, policy-makers and health-care providers, to achieve the targets set out in the Global Plan towards the elimination of new HIV infections among children by 2015 and keeping their mothers alive.

Launched at the 2011 United Nations High-Level Meeting on AIDS, the Global Plan identified 22 priority countries—21 of which are in sub-Saharan Africa—in which to redouble efforts to reduce the number of children born with HIV by 90% by 2015.

The campaign also aims to increase access to antiretroviral therapy for children. As of 2013, Botswana was the only priority country that was providing treatment to more than 80% of children living with HIV, while three other countries reached more than 40% treatment coverage for children under 15 years in 2013.

The campaign will be broadcast over 150 radio stations and more than 100 TV stations across 38 countries in Africa over the next 12 months. It will also be launched on several social media outlets to reach communities beyond the African continent.

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UNAIDS

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. UNAIDS unites the efforts of 11 UN organizations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank—and works closely with global and national partners to maximize results for the AIDS response. Learn more at unaids.org and connect with us on Facebook and Twitter.

OAFLA

The Organisation of African First Ladies Against HIV/AIDS (OAFLA) was established in 2002 as a collective voice for Africa's most vulnerable people, women and children infected and affected by the HIV pandemic. Since then, OAFLA has transformed itself from a forum of ideas to an institution capable of providing the continent-wide leadership needed to bring about change in peoples' lives. With its permanent secretariat in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, OAFLA has moved from addressing the symptoms of the HIV crisis to the root causes, poverty and the overall inequality of women in the region. For more information, visit www.oafla.org.