

PRESS STATEMENT

UNAIDS saddened by the death of Prudence Mabele

GENEVA, 11 July 2017—UNAIDS is deeply saddened by the death of Prudence Mabele. Her contribution to the AIDS response began in the early 1990s during her work with the Society of Women and AIDS in Africa. Ms Mabele was more recently the President for the Society of Women Living with HIV and the Deputy Chair of the Civil Society Forum in the South African National AIDS Council. Ms Mabele was tireless in her efforts to amplify the voice of African women living with HIV in regional and global forums.

“Prudence Mabele was a global icon, and an example of living positively with HIV. I cannot think of the AIDS response in South Africa and imagine it without her,” said Michel Sidibé, UNAIDS Executive Director.

In 1992, Ms Mabele became one of the first women living with HIV in South Africa to disclose her status. Ms Mabele said she disclosed her status because she was tired of the silence and stigma surrounding HIV. She wanted to set a precedent and encourage other women living with HIV to discuss their status with loved ones, to live without shame, to seek treatment and to lead happy and fulfilled lives.

Ms Mabele championed the cause of the greater involvement of people living with HIV. At a time when treatment was just beginning to be available, she was a driving force in addressing issues around stigma and discrimination. Ms Mabele was passionate about the need to organize and support women living with HIV.

She was also a founding member of the Treatment Action Campaign, founder and Executive Director of the Positive Women’s Network (PWN) and a founding member of the Pan African Positive Women’s Network. PWN set out to improve the quality of life of people living with HIV, providing a support network and platform for women to articulate their feelings and needs regarding their HIV status and ultimately to design positive projects for themselves.

Ms Mabele had been a very close friend of UNAIDS for a long time. Ms Mabele collaborated with UNAIDS in raising awareness about women living with HIV and their needs, and graced the cover the UNAIDS flagship publication *OUTLOOK*. She previously worked as a staff member with the UNAIDS South Africa Country Office and continued to be closely associated with UNAIDS over the years.

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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 towards ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. Learn more at unaids.org and connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.