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TAC Electronic Newsletter

By *moderator*
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    - Time (march to opening of International Microbicides Conference): 2pm to 3:30pm
    - RSVP for community meeting: Sharon Ekambaram (email:sharon@chi.org.za; tel: +27 11 339 3040; fax: +27 11 403 9873 - attention Sharon)
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Make HIV Prevention Work in Our Communities - Global March for HIV Prevention

HIV Prevention Satellite Conference and March - 23 April 2006

Prevent 2 Million New Infections in South Africa by 2010!

Set prevention targets in every country!

Endorse the demands for scaled-up, scientific, human rights based HIV prevention NOW!

Please join the Treatment Action Campaign, the South African Democratic Teacher's Union, the Chris Hani Institute, Gender AIDS Forum, Rural AIDS and Development Action Research Programme and Masimanyane at a satellite conference before the opening of the International Microbicides Conference in Cape Town.

There is a global crisis of HIV prevention and sub-Saharan Africa remains disproportionately affected. Access to HIV prevention has not been scaled up to have an impact on new infections locally and globally. UNAIDS estimates that nearly 5 million people were infected with HIV globally in 2005. Some, albeit slow, progress towards providing treatment for people with AIDS has been made, but the increasing size of the epidemic will mean that many people with HIV will go without treatment and die, even if treatment access improves dramatically. Health systems in many countries will be put under immense pressure if their growing HIV epidemics are not stemmed. This is why it is critical for prevention interventions to succeed.

The HIV prevention crisis is acute in South Africa. The annual antenatal survey shows a massive growth in HIV

prevalence among pregnant women from about 1% in 1991 to just under 30% in 2004. The recent HSRC household survey found that more than one in ten people in South Africa is HIV-positive. The Centre for Actuarial Research estimates that over 1,400 people were infected daily in 2005. From 2006 to 2010, 2.5 million people in South Africa are projected to become infected (ASSA 2003 model).

The increase in new HIV infections is an emergency. Every infection means an increased burden of illness on individuals, families, households, communities, the health service and the country. The barriers to prevention are cultural, political and economic.

Young women are at greater risk of infection than men. Stigma and violence against women and children exacerbates the risk of HIV tranmission as does the economic dependence of women on men. The social exclusion and economic marginalisation of young men reinforces the overall culture of male domination in all our societies. The absence of sex education denies young people the right to protect themselves from HIV infection, teenage pregnancy and other sexually transmitted infections. Homophobia prevents gay men from the right to access health care. False morality prevents sex workers from accessing prevention services. Intravenous drug users are denied access to scientifically proven prevention methods because of stigma, discrimination and false morality.

Lack of access to prevention methods such as male and female condoms, sexuality and life-skills education, clean neeedles, post-exposure prophylaxis for rape survivors and occupational transmission are a violation of the rights to health, life and dignity. Access to antiretroviral therapy for pregnant women in Africa and developing countries still reaches fewer than 10% of people who need it.

We believe the cycle of infection, neglect, vulnerability and risk can be broken. The affirmation of human rights for all is central to public health. Access to social security and development together with scaled up access to scientifically-based prevention methods will reduce the number of new infections.

We call for a programme of prevention and treatment in South Africa that will avert 2 million new infections by the end of 2010. We hope this will inspire activists and governments across the world to set prevention targets for their countries. Key to achieving these targets is political leadership, corporate commitment, civil society action and individual responsibility.

After the meeting we will march to the opening of the International Microbicides Conference at the International Convention Centre and hand over a memorandum to the organisers of the summit. The memorandum will describe what actions we as civil society must take and what we expect from our national governments and international institutions.

The following topics will be on the agenda:

- How reducing violence against women will reduce HIV infections
- The role of treatment in reducing HIV infections
- What are the social challenges to HIV prevention?
- What are the impediments to behaviour change?
- Proven interventions: condoms, femidoms, post-exposure prophylaxis, mother-to-child transmission prevention and needle exchange programmes.
- Possible future interventions: microbicides, circumcision and vaccines
- What do we need from our political leaders?

Details:

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- Time (march to opening of International Microbicides Conference): Starts 2pm and ends at approximately 3:30pm
- RSVP for community meeting: Sharon Ekambaram (email: sharon@chi.org.za; tel: +27 11 339 3040; fax: +27 11 403 9873 - attention Sharon)

RSVP to Sharon Ekambaram of the Chris Hani Institute. Email: sharon@chi.org.za. Tel: 011 339 3040. Fax: 011 403 9873 (please make faxes attention of Sharon Ekambaram).

If you cannot attend, please send individual and organisational endorsements tosharon@chi.org.za.

Regrettably, we cannot cover accommodation, transport or food costs for participants.

[END OF INVITATION TO COMMUNITY MEETING AND MARCH]

HIV-positive and fighting for our rights

Nkhensani Mavasa, TAC's deputy-chairperson, tells her story to Sylvia Jacobs, a TAC trainee journalist

My name is Nkhensani Mavasa from a village in Limpopo Province, South Africa. I was born in 1978. I am HIV-positive and open about my status. I was tested on 7 April 2005. At the clinic where I was giving education about HIV/AIDS, my co-ordinator always told me to go for an HIV test. But I always asked him why should I get tested? I never saw the need to do so. Eventually I decided to get tested and know about my status because I was always telling people to get tested whereas I didn't know my own status. My boyfriend accompanied me to Kensani Hospital for an HIV test. I was counselled before the test, while I waited for my results a lot of things went through my mind. The doctor called me in after ten minutes and said to me ? You are HIV-positive?. I could not believe it.

A week later I went to another clinic for a second test and the results were the same. I was still in denial, not believing what I was being told. After two days I went to the third clinic. Here I also asked for an HIV test as if I didn?t know my status. The test was done and the results were still positive. It was so hard for me to accept I was HIV-positive, I just couldn?t take it. My boyfriend supported me a lot and after a few weeks he also went for a test.

A few weeks later I told my parents, it was terrible because my father said to me ?You leave my house immediately and you are no longer a part of this family anymore.? My mother was heartbroken but she and my sisters supported me through this ordeal. I was so broken when I left my parent?s house. I was devastated by the fact that I was HIV-positive and now my father had chased me out of his house. I moved in with my boyfriend and it took me a few months to accept my status. When I educate at the clinic now I do so with more confidence because I know about my status.

Soon after I found out about my status I went public about it. People in my community started calling me names but I didn?t give up. After two months, I met a woman who is a TAC activist. She told me a lot of things about TAC, such as the organisation's constitution. I then joined TAC. When I started volunteering for TAC everything started to work out well for me and I did a lot of things in my community. I spoke about how TAC works and informed people about human rights. Many people came out about their status. I am grateful that antiretroviral treatment is available now in our clinic.

On 18 March 2006, I came to Cape Town to attend a conference where there were a lot of women from different provinces. This was a gender conference about women who were still unable to break the silence about their personal experiences. While listening to these stories, a lot of bad memories came back to me. Ten years ago I was raped by a pastor from my church. At that moment I could feel the hate inside my body. When I was raped I couldn?t tell anyone because nobody would have believed me, as the pastor was a role model to a lot of people and very powerful in the community. I was also abused at school when I was 13 years old and I have kept quiet about this for a long time. Now the time has come for me to break the silence.

Today I would like to tell women out there to break the silence and they will see a brighter day tomorrow. I want to tell all the people who are HIV-positive to stop being in denial and be open about their status so that they can help other people who are unable to come to terms with their statuses. Today I can smile about my life because it has changed a lot. I can proudly say that I love TAC because it is through the organisation that I can help other people. Today I am the National Deputy Chairperson in TAC, I would like to encourage women to stand up for their rights.

[END OF NKHENSANI'S STORY]

Story reprinted from *The Star*

'Rape could happen to your sister'

April 04 2006 at 05:23AM

By Shelly Banjo and Mike Cherney

Four soccer players from Orange Farm traded their jerseys for purple T-shirts emblazoned with "Against her will, Against the law" outside the Johannesburg High Court.

On Monday, they joined dozens of women holding signs outside Jacob Zuma's trial in support of a woman's right to report rape.

"As men, we have to support the women," said 18-year-old Mlungisi Ntshangase.

'Rape could happen to your sister'

He and his three team-mates, Abel Mokoena and Daniel Mbele (both 23) and 18-year-old Isomole Kebone, skipped school to protest outside the courthouse.

They said they wanted to show that the fight against gender-based violence was not only a woman's issue.

Lefa Tlhame, 26, a manager at the Gauteng office of the Treatment Action Campaign, joined protesters for the second day and echoed the views of the soccer players.

"The struggle during the apartheid era was not just for men's freedom. All people have the right to report abuse, regardless of their gender," he said.

The soccer players said they would recruit more people from their community to protest on Tuesday.

'To protest is not about whether you like Zuma or not'

They felt that rape should be an important issue for every man. "Rape could happen to your sister. To protest is not about whether you like Zuma or not," Mbele said.

Just metres away, Zuma supporters danced and chanted slogans.

Many wore T-shirts with messages supporting him, while some burnt women's underwear.

This article was originally published on page 3 of The Star on April 04, 2006

[END OF ARTICLE FROM STAR]

- Jacob Zuma
- Prevention
- Violence Against Women

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