Published on *Treatment Action Campaign* (http://tac.org.za/community)

TAC turns 11 and receives Human Rights Award

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Created *2009/12/09 - 10:15am*
9 December, 2009 - 10:15 ? moderator

10th December is marked globally as an International Human Rights Day. On this day the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) celebrates its eleventh anniversary. We are celebrating 11 years of hard work to ensure that every person living with HIV has access to quality comprehensive prevention and treatment services to live a healthy life. It is befitting that on this day the TAC will be receiving the Human Rights Award of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation.

The Human Rights Award of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung was presented for the first time in 1994. Each year the award is given to an individual or organisation that rendered outstanding services for human rights. Ms Nonkosi Khumalo, the Chairperson of the TAC and Ms Noloyiso Nthamehlo, coordinator of the TAC Lusikisiki Office, will receive this award on behalf of TAC.

TAC was established on 10 December 1998. At this point HIV was not a priority for government, drug prices were unaffordable and antiretroviral therapy was not yet available in the public sector. TAC demanded that treatment and prevention services be made available to all South Africans. They did this through engagements with the government, marches, court cases, civil disobedience campaigns, education campaigns, social mobilisation and other advocacy efforts.

Today South Africa has the biggest antiretroviral programme in the world but we are still far from where we need to be ? less than 50% of people in need of treatment are receiving treatment. Throughout 2009 TAC has campaigned to meet the targets of the National Strategic Plan (2007-2011) for the treatment and prevention of HIV.

Improving the treatment guidelines to put more people onto treatment and to reduce mortality and new infections has been one of the major goals of the campaign. We welcomed the announcement made by President Jacob Zuma on World AIDS Day that the treatment guidelines will be updated by 1 April 2010. The changes will increase access to treatment and reduce infant and adult mortality.

However there is more that can be done to reduce mortality and new infections. TAC will continue to advocate for all people to be initiated onto treatment earlier at a CD4 count of 350 and to secure access to affordable better drugs with lower rates of side effects and resistance and better and comprehensive prevention of new infections.

After eleven years of fighting denialism and quackery TAC welcomes a new era of government responsibility and understanding of HIV science. However, we are deeply concerned that foreign donors and governments retraction of funding commitments for treatment and prevention will undermine this. Now is not the time for funders to back step on commitments for universal access. This will destabilize the treatment programmes and systems that have been put in place. We urge all donors and governments to uphold their commitments for resources for health.

GLOBAL WEEK OF ACTION
(7 December ? 14 December)

TAC will be participating in a Global Week of Action as part of the celebration for our eleventh birthday and to sustain the awareness and activism around World AIDS Day. TAC will be carrying out HIV awareness, health systems strengthening and health promoting activities across the country.

Below is a list of activities that will be carried out across the country.

Ekurhuleni, Gauteng
Contact: Nokhwezi Hoboyi at 072 064 4157

TAC staff will be carrying out door-to-door campaigns to distribute condoms and treatment literacy material. TAC staff will also be holding workshops with TAC branches on the new treatment guidelines.

10 December
Tembisa, Madelakufa 1
Tokoza, Empilisweni section
KwaThema

11 December
Vosloorus Ext 28, Peter Mokaba informal settlement
Tokoza, Thinasonke informal settlement
Daveyton, Barcelona
Boksburg Prison

14 December
Katlehong, Mandela informal settlement
Germiston, Makause

Mopani, Limpopo
Contact person: Mashudu Mfomande at 072 808 2590

9 December
TAC Mopani will hold treatment literacy workshops for TAC?s prevention and treatment literacy practitioners and community health advocates.

10 December
In the morning TAC staff will hold a workshop on new treatment guidelines for all TAC branch organizers in the area. The workshop will be followed with door-to-door campaigns to distribute and share treatment literacy information in Homu, Dzumeri, Mpempule, Thomo, Sec F, Phalaborwa, Joppie, Mariveni, Kujwane and Dani.

11 December
TAC will hold a Partners? Meeting with civil society organizations and community members.

12 December
TAC Mopani will have a mobile campaign at the Tzaneen taxi rank.

Khayelitsha, Western Cape
Contact Person: Fredalene Booysen at 073 206 3611

9 December ? 12 December
TAC Khayelitsha will hold door-to-door campaigns and distribute new materials.

14 December
TAC Khayelitsha and members will picket outside the office of the MEC for Health, Mr. Theuns Botha. TAC will hand over a memorandum to Mr. Botha highlighting the following issues:
1) Khayelitsha still does not have a District Health Plan
2) Khayelitsha does not have a District Health Council

2) Khayelitsha does not have a human resources plan
3) Tenofovir should be made accessible as part of first line regimens
4) Stock-outs of formula milk and lack of transparency and accountability for stock-outs at a district level

Lusikisiki, Eastern Cape
Contact Person: Thandeka Vinjwa Hlongwane at 083 426 1296

8 ? 9 December
TAC Lusikisiki aims to provide information to 1000 women in 6 communities on the importance of having a pap smear.

10 December
TAC Lusikisiki has arranged for the O.R. Tambo District Department of Health to allow women to walk in for pap smear screenings on this day. Getting a pap smear is essential to the early detection of cervical cancer which is prevalent amongst HIV-positive women. TAC aims to have 100 women screened on this day.

Gert Sibande, Mpumalanga
Contact Person: Malusi Mbatha at 082 489 8819 or Thandi Maluka at 072 279 2112

10 December
TAC staff and partners will be holding door-to-door campaigns in Amsterdam, Iswepe and Briesfontein on the importance of accrediting more sites and to distribute treatment literacy material.

9 December
TAC and partners will hold a public meeting in Briesfontein. The site was chosen for the meeting as it is a facility that is being accredited to provide antiretroviral therapy. However before the site is accredited it must be assessed by the Provincial Health Department and this is taking far too long. The public meeting will inform clinic managers, community health workers and ward counsellors on the importance of having the site and others accredited. A submission will be developed to be sent to the Provincial Department of Health in order to speed up the process of accreditation.

12 December
TAC Gert Sibande will hold an open community meeting in the Briesfontein Community Center highlighting the importance of knowing your status and adhering to treatment.

uMgungundlovu, KwaZulu-Natal
Contact Person: Richard Shandu at 083 988 8498

12 December
TAC and partners will be holding a testing drive in the North Gale Community Centre. The Department of Health will be setting up tents to provide voluntary counselling and testing services. TAC?s community health advocates and treatment literacy practitioners will provide information and material to community members.

[ENDS]n/a

Source URL (retrieved on *2016/05/28 - 6:02pm*): http://tac.org.za/community/node/2793