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Nobody call it quits at half-time!

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Truly speaking, the little I know about morality, I learnt it on football pitches. Albert Camus, French philosopher and Nobel Prize Laureate in Literature.

In four days? time the sound of a whistle and crisp thud of a boot on a football will herald a month when the world?s eyes are fixed on South Africa.

In the coming weeks, billions of people will watch the spectacle of the much-anticipated Fifa World Cup 2010, held for the first time in its 80-year existence in Africa.

For the most part the global television audience of more than 300 million will be focussed on what happens on the 10 football pitches around South Africa and celebrating the winning teams.

But Médecins Sans Frontières / Doctors Without Borders (MSF) and other organisations want the world to see the full picture. While the unifying power of football is celebrated 1.4 million people are still dying needlessly of HIV/Aids each year in sub-Saharan Africa. The majority of these deaths could be averted by increased access to antiretroviral therapies (ART) and a right to treatment.

MSF wants to remind the world that the HIV/Aids crisis is not over.

MSF teams are present in several countries of the Southern African region and provide assistance, treatment and care in numerous communities affected by HIV/Aids and its deadly associate disease, tuberculosis.

During the following six weeks, this blog will give people living with HIV/Aids, MSF doctors, nurses, lay counsellors and football supporters the opportunity to speak out about this reality while the world?s media and competing nations focus on the football matches.

The world has witnessed remarkable achievements in the fight against HIV/Aids during the last 10 years which saved the lives of millions in developing countries through the scale-up of treatment and care for people living with HIV/Aids.

More than 4 million people in developing countries now have access to life-saving ARTs ? an incredible medical feat. However all these efforts are not enough as 9.5 million more people in the developing world who need ART are still on the waiting list.

But a treatment funding deficit will condemn these millions of people living with HIV/Aids to death.

These millions of people are almost all entirely dependent on donor countries and institutions like the US President?s Emergency Plan for Aids Relief and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, in order to survive. But there has been a perceptible shift among donor countries in the G8 away from promises they made to keep up with long-term commitments to fund ARTs for people living with HIV/Aids.

So, what we are seeing now is that the much-anticipated happy and normal full time that life-prolonging funded ART would have brought is now under threat.

The effect of a donor retreat on funding the HIV/Aids fight is like having the referee blow his whistle to stop the World Cup final match halfway through. It would cause an outrage, with nations and people up in arms over the match being stopped at half-time. But the sad fact is when donors and the rich nations start turning the HIV funding tap off ? an action that will result in the premature and preventable death of millions of people needing immediate treatment for HIV/Aids ? it happens with little or no reaction or outrage. This is not acceptable.

We call on the world to protest against lives being lost because poor nations cannot afford treatment.

By reading this blog and contributing your views, you can take a stand in support of universal access to treatment and care for ALL people living with HIV/Aids. By doing this you?ll stand in support of giving people in developing countries living with HIV/Aids a sporting chance. The world needs to demand Extra-Time in the deciding match where scoring for treatment, saving the lives of people and beating HIV/Aids is the ultimate goal. Let the provision of funded and scaled-up antiretroviral treatment and saving millions of lives be the winner, then only will the world triumph.

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