



MARCH 2007 Volume 1, Edition 1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Page 2-4** Campaign Focus: Zambia
Page 4-5 G8 Campaign Information
Page 6 Other Campaign Updates
 and Organisational News

Universal Access Campaigner's Update is a quarterly campaigner's newsletter on AIDS campaigning around the world.

This is the first edition of the *Universal Access Campaigner's Update*.

United Nations (UN) member states have committed themselves to "scaling up HIV prevention, treatment, care and support with the aim of coming as close as possible to the goal of universal access to treatment by 2010 for all those who need it." (UN General Assembly, 2005)

UN member states also committed to setting targets for achieving universal access and involving civil society every step of the way. Yet in some countries targets have still not been set, and in other countries the process has taken place without the knowledge or involvement of broader civil society.

For universal access to become a reality, UN agencies and national governments should be doing far more to scale up services and civil society should be as vocal as necessary to ensure progress is made. This newsletter is one small contribution to making that happen.

WORLD AIDS DAY THEME ANNOUNCED

Crucial to achieving universal access will be leadership, the theme for World AIDS Day 2007 and 2008. The World AIDS Campaign (WAC) announced the theme on 5 March 2007. The theme "leadership" was agreed by WAC's Global Steering Committee at its last meeting in Switzerland, 8th to 9th of February 2007.

This is what some of the members of WAC's Global Steering Committee have said to explain the importance of leadership as a theme:

Linda Hartke, Coordinator, Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance: *"...By taking on the global theme of leadership for World AIDS Day, faith leaders and the communities they are a part of can help articulate a vision, build relationships and take concrete action in solidarity with all people committed to reaching universal access for HIV prevention, treatment and care."*

Deloris Dockrey, Chairperson, Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS and representative for International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS: *"We are still dying! Leadership requires that we face this reality. While leadership is a strong call and can easily be embraced, I have been very disappointed with our leaders..."*

Prateek Suman, Youth Coalition: *"Young people are the worst hit by HIV/AIDS but they have a vital role to play in the fight against the pandemic. Youth leadership is essential to an effective international response to HIV/AIDS..."*

Alan Leather, Chairperson, Global Unions Programme on HIV/AIDS: *"...Union advocacy and leadership is crucial if countries are to achieve universal access to treatment, care and prevention by 2010."*

To read more about what our constituencies have to say about the theme, or for more information about the theme, please visit www.worldaidscampaign.org.



Universal access on treatment, care, prevention and support in Zambia seems a very distant goal. As part of the “3x5” campaign the Zambian government committed to treating 100,000 people by 2005. So far only 76,000 Zambians are receiving treatment. It’s another country where politicians are not keeping their promises on AIDS.

In 2007, WAC will work closely with civil society groups in Zambia, Nigeria and Kenya, as part of WAC’s support to national campaigners in sub-Saharan Africa. This March, Felicita Hikuam and Thomas Scalway of the WAC Support Team visited Zambia to find out how to support civil society in their work with government to make sure these promises, and others, are kept. Their visit to Zambia follows a number of visits in previous years by WAC and precedes trips to Nigeria and Kenya later this month. In this newsletter we share a few of the reflections that this trip gave rise to.

Zambia is a challenging country for civil society efforts on AIDS. According to Malala Mwendela from Zambia AIDS Law Research and Advocacy Network (ZARAN), “it is difficult for civil society to engage meaningfully with government. The mechanisms that exist are largely government controlled and advocacy is frowned upon.”

According to Pablo Sichelwe from ZARAN, “the rights of people living with HIV are not protected.” The Zambian constitution drafted in 1991 has no mention of

the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS. Two years ago this constitution was updated, but is yet to be formally adopted. In effect what this means is that Zambian activists are unable to use the law courts to pressurise governments to provide adequate care and protection for people living with HIV. In South Africa, it was by working with the law courts that Treatment Action Campaign and its partners forced the government to provide AIDS treatments. ZARAN has been one of the many agencies putting pressure on the President demanding that the constitution be adopted. Yet the President has recently been declaring in the media that due to the current flooding in Zambia, adopting the constitution is “not a priority”.

In the absence of a modern constitution, say ZARAN, the Zambian National AIDS Policy provides the most meaningful framework for holding government accountable for their promises on AIDS. Yet this policy, drafted in 2001, was only adopted in 2005, despite sustained pressure from civil society. With the fast pace of developments in treatment, prevention and international AIDS policy, the new AIDS policy is already out of date.

CAMPAIGN FOCUS: ZAMBIA



(Picture left) Angela Cifire, Zambian Minister of Health, responding to TALC. Photo Credit: Mel Hein, TALC

(Picture right) Leaders of TALC protesting over false newspaper claims of miracle AIDS cure. Photo Credit: Mel Hein, TALC

There are countless examples of why Zambia is a difficult country in which to advocate to the government on AIDS issues. According to Professor Luo, Chair of Society of Women Against AIDS in Zambia, and an ex-minister herself, who is widely regarded as a leader on a number of AIDS issues, “there are a number of structures now in place that make it difficult to go and talk to ministers.” She gives the example of the ministers’ social secretaries, who shield any minister from unplanned conversations with AIDS lobbyists. Luo says, “There was a time when you could talk to ministers about your concerns. Now that is not possible.”

According to Professor Luo, there is a deep mistrust between the Zambian government and NGOs. NGOs think that the government is against civil society and is mispending funds. It’s an understandable assumption when looking at the countless gleaming jeeps outside the National AIDS Council that AIDS money seems to be amassing. At the same time, the government distrusts NGOs, questioning their heavy international funding which they say is often used to undermine or critique government efforts.

Treatment Advocacy and Literacy Campaign (TALC) is working in Zambia to lobby for better access to treatment, care and support for people living with HIV. Registered in 2005, and only acquiring office space in 2006, this is a small new organisation with a big voice.

One of the reasons why TALC is an exciting organisation within the Zambian civil society landscape is because they are not afraid to be openly critical of government. According to Felix Mwanza, Director of TALC, “there is systematic exclusion of civil society in Zambian AIDS decision making.” TALC members feel they have a right to speak out about the treatment problems in Zambia, including accessing drugs, changing treatment lines and representing their needs to decision makers. In November 2006 TALC joined with other civil society groups and people living with HIV to raise concerns about the way in which Global Fund money is spent. Zambia was refused funding in round six of the

Global Fund call for proposals because a large amount of existing Global Fund money was unspent. TALC has put pressure on principal recipients of Global Fund money to publish their funding status in the media, and has since been working with other civil society partners to create transparency on the situation.

A good illustration of the challenges of independent civil society campaigning in Zambia lies in what people are saying about World AIDS Day.

Last year, TALC attempted unsuccessfully to involve itself in national preparations for World AIDS Day. Writing to senior officials and calling for a meeting of different civil society agencies, TALC received no response. According to TALC, and a number of other civil society agencies, World AIDS Day in Zambia is mainly coordinated by the Zambian National AIDS Council with little input from genuinely independent civil society agencies. Felix Mwanza, told WAC, “it’s so painful to be a person living with HIV and to see politicians standing up on stage just because it is World AIDS Day and that’s what people expect.” According to Mwanza and others, World AIDS Day has become so institutionalised within the government AIDS calendar that there are rarely challenging or critical voices heard on 1st December.

According to Professor Michael Kelly, one of the best known Zambian AIDS experts, the problem with World AIDS Day in Zambia is that a good deal of energy goes into it but after the day itself, nothing much follows: “it is very necessary to get across the culture of a sustained campaign and not an episodic one.”

Campaigning in action

On the day WAC Support Team visited TALC, campaigners were marching through the streets of Lusaka demanding that the government give adequate protection from false cures.

A Zambian newspaper, The Weekly Angel, had printed lengthy articles about a new cure for AIDS. In the article, the writer also encouraged people to stop taking ARVs, stop using condoms,

stop going for VCT and to stop vaccinations of adults and children. TALC felt the message was dangerous and marched to National AIDS Council where a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on HIV and AIDS was being held. TALC members demanded better action by the government to respond to and correct false cure claims and to ensure drugs were not being sold in Zambia without having been proven effective and cleared by government authorities.

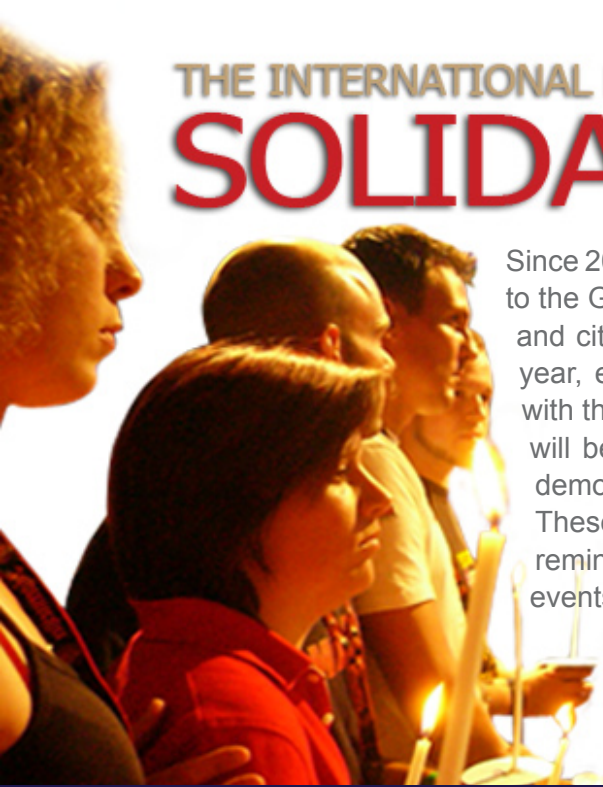
TALC chair, Clementine Mumba, used the opportunity to present a petition to Zambian Minister of Health, Angela Cifere, calling for government action. TALC hopes the action will show the government that advocacy can be positive and represent a call to action, as much as highlighting governmental problems that need to be addressed.

G8 CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

This year the G8 summit will be held 6-8 June in Heiligendamm, Germany. The G8 summit and its corresponding meetings are important because some of the world's most critical issues are discussed. Despite often being criticised for having an overly northern focus, and not having truly 'global' representation, the outcomes from the G8 meetings do help to determine the world's development agenda. In the fight against AIDS, the G8 plays a particularly important role. Universal Access on AIDS first reached the international AIDS policy agenda at the G8. The G8 continues to attract attention from leaders and media from around the world.

The G8 is not only important to country leaders, but for non-governmental and civil society organisations also. It gives civil society an opportunity to speak up and advocate for their issues to be heard. Universal access, for example, was put on the G8 agenda through the actions of civil society groups in the run up to the 2005 Gleneagles Summit. Each G8 marks an opportunity for civil society activists to hold leaders accountable to the AIDS promises they have made. This G8, there are many events and initiatives that are important to the AIDS campaigners.

THE INTERNATIONAL NIGHT OF SOLIDARITY



Since 2004, Germans have observed "Night of Solidarity" events just prior to the G8 summit. The purpose of these events is to bring organisations and citizens together to raise awareness and solidarity on AIDS. Last year, events took place in over 80 cities across Germany. This year, with the G8 summit taking place in Germany, Night of Solidarity events will be expanding internationally with campaigners around the world demonstrating solidarity with German civil society prior to the G8. These events will keep the spotlight on AIDS during the G8 summit and remind G8 leaders to keep the promises they have made. Planning for events is happening now. To learn more about this event, or how you can join or create a Night of Solidarity event in your city, please visit our website.

AIDS-Hilfe, Köln, Germany

CAMPAIGNING FOR G8

ACCOUNTABILITY

The G8 summit in July 2006 renewed its commitment to tackle AIDS, along with tuberculosis and malaria. The G8 also promised to regularly review progress made by G8 nations on AIDS. Most significantly, the G8 committed to supporting current efforts for universal access to treatment, care and prevention. The Global Unions Programme on AIDS, supported by the WAC is working with a broad alliance of partners to ensure the G8 keeps its promises on AIDS.

In December 2006, Global Unions re-launched their HIV/AIDS Campaign to convince heads of state attending June's G8 Summit in Germany to create a high-level G8 Working Group on AIDS, with technical support from such existing bodies such as UNAIDS and its co-sponsors.

These partners believe that AIDS should be on the G8 agenda annually. The G8 must be held accountable for its commitments on AIDS. This is particularly true in relation to international efforts for universal access on AIDS treatment, care and prevention. This will require robust new surveillance and monitoring strategies, with strong technical support.

Nothing short of a built-in mechanism that regularly and systematically reviews progress on G8 commitments on AIDS will ensure that they become a reality. This could be through the establishment of a high-level permanent G8 working group – our preferred option – which creates an ongoing and coordinated entry point for advocacy on a variety of AIDS-related issues. Other alternatives include designating AIDS-related issues as a standing item on the G8 agenda.

Campaigners and advocates for a G8 Working Group are deliberately avoiding making specific formulations of what this working group could look like. Ultimately the G8 principals will decide what the mechanism will be and how its work can realistically contribute to the G8 process.

The Global Unions are now asking that civil society partners work with them to build on last year's work by organising activities or public events to highlight the delivery of a letter requesting support for a G8 working group to German embassies in their countries.

For the unions this work will come to a fore at the 2007 28 April "International Commemoration Day (ICD) for Dead and Injured Workers."

In the meantime, a series of parallel lobby activities will take place at international meetings of Environment, Health and Labour Ministries. One such event has already taken place in Kenya in February, where the General Secretary of the Congress of Trade Unions (COTU), Francis Atwoli, formally launched the campaign with environment ministers.

For more information about the work of the Global Unions at the G8 contact Lucien Royer royer@tuac.org.

For other information on general AIDS campaigning around the G8 contact World AIDS Campaign.

UPCOMING G8 EVENTS

26-27 March

G8 Development Ministers Meeting
in Berlin

26-28 April

G8 Sherpa's Meeting in Bonn

6 -7 May

Labour Ministers Meeting in Dresden

13 May

Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting
in Potsdam

18 - 19

G8 Finance Ministers Meeting in Potsdam

ORGANISATIONAL NEWS

“Women Won’t Wait” Coalition Launched

“Women Won’t Wait”, a new international coalition of women’s groups, launched its campaign to end HIV and violence against women with a new report: “Show Us the Money: Is Violence Against Women on the HIV&AIDS Donor Agenda?” Mary Robinson, former president of Ireland and one of the speakers at the launch of the campaign, said, “It is vital that the policies, programs and funding streams of national governments and international agencies transparently address the intersection of HIV and AIDS and violence against women. At the same time, civil society must hold both governments and agencies accountable to promoting human rights and the self-determination of women, as this coalition seeks to do.”

To read more, please visit their website www.womenwontwait.org

Worship Service Supports Global Fund Replenishment Process

On 4 March 2007, faith-based organisations in Norway, including the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA), held a “Keep the Promise” worship service at the Cathedral in Oslo to show support for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria second replenishment process meeting which took place on 6 -7 March.

To read more about this, please visit www.e-alliance.ch/.

TAC Offers a Statement on Newly Appointed Acting Minister of Health

Regarding the new appointment of the acting South African Minister of Health, the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) has warned that, “the public health system is in crisis and requires dedicated leadership.”

To read more about the statement, please visit www.tac.org.za.

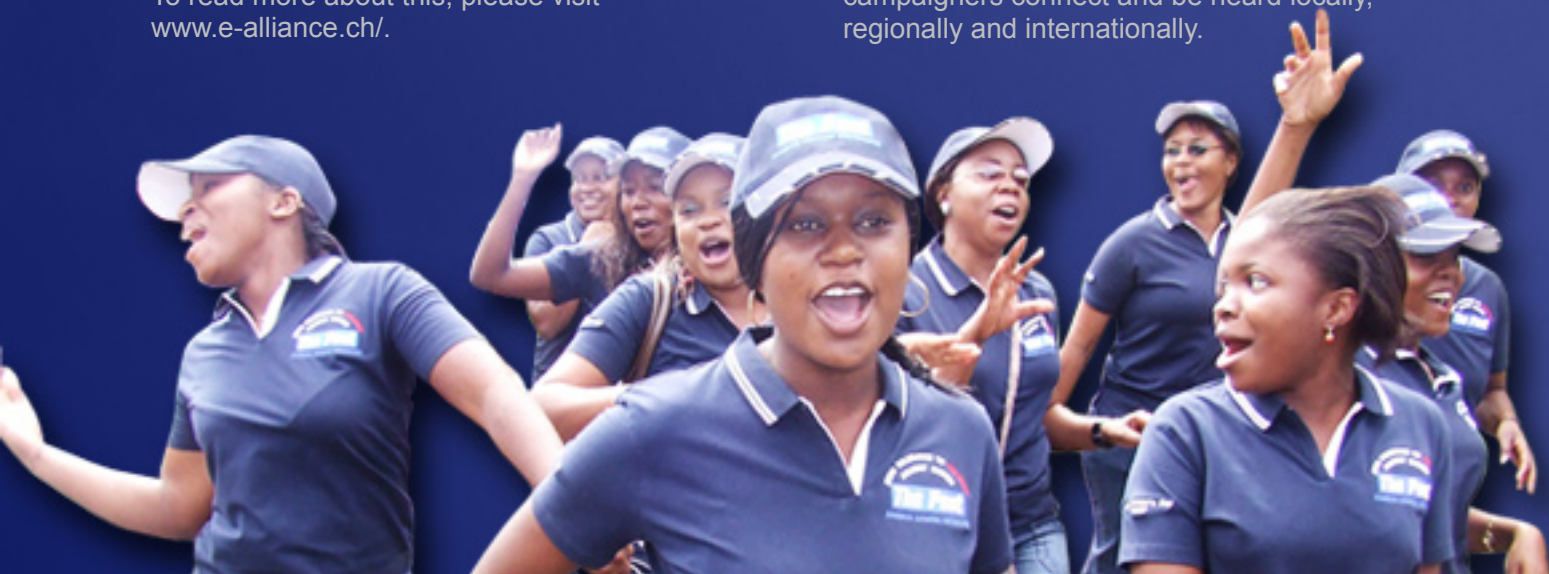
The Novartis vs. Affordable Medicines

“The Novartis court case in India threatens to close the pharmacy of the world.” Novartis’ legal action against the Indian government could have a potential impact on access to medicines around the world.

To follow the progress of the case and get more background on it, please visit www.msf.org.

Organisational news

- The Global Steering Committee of the WAC met in Switzerland on the 8th and 9th and February.
- In February 2007 WAC started its programme of supporting independent campaigning voices on AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. The principal objective of the campaign is to help African campaigners connect and be heard locally, regionally and internationally.



Young Zambian women marching under slogan of Zero Tolerance of Sexual Violence on International Women’s Day.

Photo Credit: Derick Sinjela

To read more about these and other organisational stories, please visit www.worldaidscampaign.org.

World AIDS Campaign

The Universal Access Campaigner's Update is a quarterly newsletter published by the World AIDS Campaign. The newsletter highlights AIDS campaigning efforts from around the world,

particularly highlighting campaigns that hold leaders accountable to keeping their promises on universal access to treatment, care and prevention. Content is collected by the World AIDS Campaign Support Team and its partners. If your organisation is interested in submitting information or updates to this newsletter you can contact us at newsletter@worldaidscampaign.org

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