

**ENDING AIDS – AN ACHIEVABLE GOAL?**

**TAKE ACTION**

World AIDS Day on December 1 marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the discovery of AIDS and for the first time in three decades there is hope that the “end of the AIDS epidemic is within our grasp”! New scientific breakthroughs coupled with institutional frameworks are helping to win this fight. What is needed now is the political will and financial commitment to end this pandemic. This month will be a media focused action, we ask you to place an op-ed, letter to the editor or editorial in a local newspaper. In your article the following points should be included: \* Also find attached an op-ed piece prepared by RESULTS for your reference.

1. Mounting evidence pointing to the decline in the AIDS pandemic and the historic opportunity to END AIDS
2. Breakthrough scientific research that indicates that treatment and prevention can go hand in hand, and investing in proven interventions and recommendations from the UNAIDS Framework
3. An increase of \$6 billion in funding per year could prevent 12.2 million new infections and 7.4 million AIDS deaths by 2020!
4. Call on the Australian Government on World AIDS Day to strengthen its global AIDS policy and funding to achieve the monumental goal of ending AIDS.
5. Ensure that TB-HIV co-infection is addressed in Australia’s country programs, with increased TB screening of HIV patients and access to treatment. This is critical in countries such as Papua New Guinea, which has high rates of TB-HIV co-infection.
6. The Australian Government has the opportunity to take global leadership by putting pressure on other donor nations to *immediately* make good on their pledges to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria. This must be coupled with Australia’s increased longer term support to the Global Fund from AU\$210 million to a minimum of AU\$500 million and host the upcoming mid term replenishment meeting in Australia.

**The Opportunity to END AIDS and Recent Developments**

*“Let’s keep focused on the future. And one of those futures that I hope we can be part of achieving is an AIDS-free generation.” Hillary Clinton, US Secretary of State – November 8, 2011*

World AIDS Day (December 1 2011) marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the discovery of AIDS, a destructive pandemic that entered into our vocabulary in June 1981. Since its discovery AIDS has killed 25 million people around the world, and 34 million are living with HIV today with the vast majority in low-income countries, 68% in Sub-Saharan Africa alone.

While these are sobering numbers, this year’s World AIDS Day marks a significant moment with scientific evidence indicating that the “end of the AIDS epidemic is within our grasp”. Mounting evidence points to a decline in the epidemic with the numbers infected declining from 2.1m in 2005 to 1.8m in 2009. Drug treatment has saved a further 5m lives and rates of new infection are down by 25% in some of the worst affected countries. Two key knowledge sources have also

emerged in the past year to support the positive claims, the first being clinical trials indicating treatment and prevention options and the second being the UNAIDS Investment Framework.

### ***Treatment is Prevention***

In May 2011, researchers announced the results of a breakthrough study known as HPTN 052. This study indicated that treatment of HIV positive patients with anti-retroviral therapy (ART) could actually reduce transmission rates by 96%. This is an incredible discovery as it means that treatment and prevention can actually go hand in hand. ART treatment combined with other prevention strategies such as pregnant mother to child transmission, male circumcision, condom education and more can lead to a significant reduction in HIV/AIDS deaths and new infections.

### ***The UNAIDS Investment Framework***

In June 2011, UNAIDS published an Investment Framework on how universal access to HIV prevention, treatment and care could be achieved by 2015. Based on extensive modeling the framework outlines that by increasing AIDS funding to \$22 billion per year by 2015, this can then be reduced every year after and actually “turn the table on the pandemic”. This would prevent 12.2 million new infections and 7.4 million AIDS deaths by 2020!

The Framework also sets out critical programmatic areas where investment should be concentrated: prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV; condom promotion and distribution; targeted programs with at-risk populations like sex workers, men who have sex with men and intravenous drug users; treatment, care and support for people living with HIV (including ARV treatment); male circumcision; and behaviour change programs.

### **The Hidden Threat: TB-HIV co-infection**

*“Every minute, three people living with HIV have their lives snatched away by tuberculosis (TB)” – Stop TB campaign*

Tuberculosis is the leading killer of people with HIV/AIDS and the end to AIDS will not be possible if the high rate of TB-HIV co-infection is not addressed. Despite TB killing more people with HIV than any other disease, currently fewer than 5% of people living with HIV/AIDS are actually being screened for TB. By starting AIDS treatment earlier, improving the quality and access of TB services, and ensuring people living with HIV/AIDS are tested for TB (and vice versa), TB-related AIDS deaths can be reduced by 80% by 2015 – saving over 1 million lives (see Stop TB Partnership, Save a Million Lives campaign for more information:

[http://www.stoptb.org/assets/documents/resources/publications/acsm/TB\\_HIV\\_Brochure\\_Singles.pdf](http://www.stoptb.org/assets/documents/resources/publications/acsm/TB_HIV_Brochure_Singles.pdf)

### **What about the Funds?**

2010 saw external and donor funding to fight HIV/AIDS fall for the first time, reducing by 10%. Rich countries, which were at the forefront of the AIDS battle are cutting their contributions leading the Economist to note that “the question for the world will no longer be whether it can wipe out the plague, but whether it is prepared to pay the price.” As outlined in the UNAIDS Investment framework, global AIDS funding for 2011 is \$16 billion. This will need to peak at \$22 billion per year by 2015 – another \$6 billion to bring the global AIDS epidemic under control and achieve the goal of a generation free of AIDS.

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (Global Fund) is a vital organisation in this fight, yet the Global Fund is facing unprecedented financial difficulties due to donor governments’ failure to fulfill their financial pledges. On November 22nd due to a lack of funding the Global Fund board decided to cancel its 11th funding round – the first time a round has

ever been cancelled in the Fund's 10 year history. The cancellation of new grant-making until 2014 will effectively halt programs that provide basic services to treat AIDS, TB, and Malaria in countries most ravaged by the diseases – with countless lives lost as a consequence. Australia has the opportunity to take global leadership by putting pressure on other donor nations to immediately make good on their pledges, while increasing their own longer-term support to the Fund.

In many countries especially in Sub Saharan Africa the Global Fund provides the mechanisms and money to buy life saving treatment and put in place prevention strategies to reduce transmission and infection. In her recent speech, Hilary Clinton acknowledged the important work of the Global fund, calling on donor nations to support the fund – stating “to sit on the sidelines now would be devastating. It would cost lives, and we would miss out on this unprecedented opportunity.”

### **Australia's Role**

Australia's global HIV/AIDS program in 2011 is \$172 million focusing on PNG, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Burma, the Philippines, South Pacific as well as Africa. World AIDS Day will be a critical moment to make the case to the Australian government that global AIDS policy and funding must be strengthened to End AIDS in this generation. Greater funding must be provided to multilateral institutions such as the Global Fund to ensure treatment as prevention options are provided to HIV/AIDS patients. Australia must also ensure its regional HIV/AIDS programs reflect recent recommendations provided through the Investment Framework and the save a million lives campaign.

### ***Other Resources***

Media letter writing tips: <http://www.results.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/2011-Tips-for-Writing-Letters-to-the-Media.pdf>

More details on the UNAIDS Investment Framework:

<http://results.org.uk/sites/default/files/Background%20Sheet%201-%20November%202011-%20The%20framework%20for%20Investment.pdf>

Economist Article: [www.economist.com/node/18774722](http://www.economist.com/node/18774722)