

Firelight Newsflash! 1 June 2009

Tides Foundation seeks Letters of Interest from African NGOs

The Tides Foundation is requesting Letters of Interest from NGOs based in the Sub-Saharan Africa under the "Money Well Spent" Program. Organized with the support of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the program intends to improve the funding resources available for family planning and reproductive health in the region. The program will provide support to advocacy and policy-related activities so that the available financial resources for promoting family planning and reproductive health have better efficiency and more effectiveness in terms of serving the targeted communities.

The proposed solutions should be within the timeframe of 1-3 years and should be planned and intervened at the policy-level by applying a set of advocacy strategies. The work can be "at the local, institutional, systemic, national, multi-country, international or other levels." The Tides Foundation encourages local organizations in the region to apply for this funding support. Even a group or coalition of organizations are eligible to apply for the program. A total funding of US \$3.5 million has been pooled for this program but the budgetary limits for each proposed intervention has not been specified though this information has to be submitted by the proponent in the Letter of Interest.

The Letter of Interest will consist of an Organization Information Sheet that can be downloaded from the Foundation's website. The Letter of Interest will consist of one narrative description, not more than five pages, explaining the proposed solution and the activities associated with it and a preliminary budget in US dollars. All this information can be submitted by email. The last date for receiving the Letters of Interest is 12 June 2009. For more information,

visit: <http://www.tidesfoundation.org/moneywellspent/index.html>

For other funding opportunities, see the following blog: <http://www.fundsforngos.org/>

Capacity assessment tool for quality OVC responses

The International HIV/AIDS Alliance developed tools and guides to support the development of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGSLD) Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children Programme in Uganda.

This capacity assessment tool can be used to analyse the capacity of national civil society organisations (CSOs) that implement orphans and other vulnerable children (OVC) activities. Specifically, the tool can be used to identify capacity building needs, plan technical support interventions, and monitor and evaluate the impact of capacity building support.

To download the tool in PDF, see:

http://www.aidsalliance.org/custom.asp/publications/view.asp?publication_id=378

A story of inspiration from Malawi

SETTING THE PACE IN THE WORLD OF STIGMA...

By: Suzgo Chitete

Eleanor Roosevelt, a White House first lady from 1933-1945, may be dead a long time ago, but her words continue to shape the way of life. One such remarkable quote in her myriad speeches is, "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent".

If you met a 44 year old, Berwings Sambo, of Traditional Authority Mabilabo in Mzimba, you would agree that when Eleanor Roosevelt delivered a speech that contained the quote in question, had people like Sambo in mind.

Sambo, a typical farmer, is a father of eight. He was tested HIV positive in 2004, the news, he found so shocking and disturbing. Until he accepted the results and started living positively, Sambo became a living testimony that has inspired many in Mabilabo.

"I could not believe that I was infected and I tested more than once just to prove myself right, but in all cases, the news remained the same, until I learnt to accept the reality" said Sambo, as he started narrating what he calls 'his life story' that has persuaded many in his area either to go for an HIV test or accept positive diagnosis and live positively.

According to Sambo, after knowing his HIV status, he broke the news to the wife and reasoned with her if she could go for VCT as well. "It was not easy to convince her to accept my results and go for VCT; honestly, my marriage was on the verge of collapse. But any way, I was happy that she finally agreed" he added.

After breaking the news to the wife, and the wife accepting to go for an HIV test where she tested positive too, the second task was for him and the wife to break the news to their children, which they managed. They had a good reason of revealing the results to their children.

Children whose knowledge on HIV was shallow and all they knew was that it was a killer, and an infection that only attacked those that are promiscuous. Perhaps, this thinking is a result of the society that has so many misconceptions about the pandemic. Most of them, save for a few, regard the infection as ignominious and tend to look at those who are infected as lesser human beings. In extreme circumstances, people infected with HIV are considered as sinners that will perish right away.

The society has come to embrace out-dated views about HIV that has culminated into denial, abandonment, and rejection of those that are infected. It is these ill-behavioral

tendencies that prompted the existence of awareness campaigns that call for total end to HIV related stigma and discrimination.

Despite these intensive campaigns, stigma and Discrimination against those that are infected remain a reality in Malawi.

With or without Stigma, Sambo has to go on with life because he believed that he can live a normal life even after HIV infection. Four years after the infection, Sambo still enjoys a health and productive life.

“Then, I called all my children and broke the news, and from there, I started teaching them more about HIV/AIDS. Until they came to fully understand what it means to be positive,” said Sambo as he continued telling the story he finds interesting to share.

He added that his children play an important role in his life as they are always happy to remind him to take medication. But why was it so necessary that he broke the news to these children when he could have lived a life without their knowledge?

Sambo justified, “I consider myself the living example and I would like to tell the world the truth about HIV and what it means to be HIV positive. I emphasize on prevention of the infection and I don’t want others to mess up just as I did. I want my experience to save millions out there, but before I reach out to millions, I have to ensure that my family is knowledgeable about the reality of HIV, as charity begins at home.”

Sambo has used every forum to disclose his HIV status with an over-all aim of letting people pick a leaf from his experience. He has always emphasized the need for people that are HIV positive to come in the open and share their results, and in so doing, according to Sambo, the fight against HIV may be won. He believes that once HIV positive people learn to accept their status and the importance of disclosure, Stigma and Discrimination will be a forgotten rhythm.

“Sometimes when you feel bad about the results, and hate yourself for the situation, you initiate self stigma which the society may end up amplifying.

So, first, realize that it is a situation you cannot reverse, hence, the need to live with it happily and responsibly” emphasized the ever-smiling Sambo.

In order to persuade others to follow his style of disclosure, Sambo, together with friends who are also HIV positive, formed a group called Nkhongono AIDS Support Group. The group has been involved in HIV awareness campaigns. Apart from campaigns, the group is seriously involved in In-come Generating Activities like farming of maize, jam making and sell their proceedings, which in turn, help them in their day to day life.

With support from Community Youth in Development Activities, COYIDA, the group boasts of three acres of maize and has a grain bank for proper storage of maize grains.

“In case one of us falls sick we use the proceedings to help each other. And we also use the money for logistics during awareness meetings among many, for this, we are thankful to COYIDA for their untiring effort in supporting us” concluded Sambo who in his area is well known of his vocal talk on HIV/AIDS.

And for those that continue to live in a cocoon because they are HIV positive, Sambo offers them a free lesson that positive living is a possibility and the society will not deprive them of their dignity and respect because of their status, only if they give consent to this, just as Eleanor Roosevelt said many decades ago.

GLOBAL: Moving the fight from the boardroom to the ground

NAIROBI, 28 May (IRIN) - The war against HIV/AIDS, which has too often been fought in plush offices and conference centres, needs to be reclaimed by people in developing countries, who are most affected, or it will continue to be a losing battle.

CLICK ON LINK BELOW FOR FULL REPORT:

<http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportID=84601>

REPORT: First Civil Society Forum Meeting on and around the African Committee on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

Published by The African Child Policy Forum, Plan International, Save the Children and the Africa Wide Movement for Children.

[ADDIS ABABA] - The First Civil Society Forum on the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACEWRC) was staged in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 17-19 April, 2009. The aim of the meeting, which was held prior to the Committee's 13th session, was to discuss ways for civil society to support the Committee's work. During the meeting, participants developed recommendations for the Committee, States and civil society organisations on communications, alternative reporting, rules of procedure and the Committee's action plan. NGOs which have already submitted alternative reports or communications also shared their experiences. The forum, which drew sixty participants from across the continent, including representatives from the Committee, will now be held as a regular event.

To read a summary or the full report, and for further information, see: <http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=20299>

For more information on the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, see: <http://www.crin.org/RM/acrwc.asp>

To read "Advancing Children's Rights: A Guide for Civil Society Organisations on how

to engage with the African child rights committee",
see: <http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=20111&flag=report>

WARNING - FRAUDULENT CONFERENCES

Firelight Foundation has received word of many incidences of fraudulent conference organizers who are scamming organizations and individuals throughout Africa. These illegitimate conference organizers are running scams where registration fees are collected for conferences that do not exist. Some suspected frauds are: the Queen Elizabeth Grant Award, International Youth Welfare Organization, Ben Russ Foundation, George Miller Foundation, and Global Youth Action Network Organization. Some messages even contain links to a website where recipients are asked to provide, among other information, extensive bank account details.

Because of this, we urge you to check very carefully about the details of the conference, the organizers, and the sponsors BEFORE transferring money for conference registration. You have a right to know the names and address of the organizing committee members, where other participants are coming from, specific logistical arrangements, and other details. If someone is unwilling to provide this information, they are most likely "fishing" for participants, hoping to get your registration fees and not delivering on the rest of their promises.

Our partners DO deserve recognition and you should be very proud of your accomplishments...but beware of such criminals!

As part of the Firelight Foundation's Monitoring, Evaluation and Technical Assistance (META) Program, Firelight provides "Newsflashes" to share relevant resources and information with our active grantee-partners via weekly emails and via post on a monthly basis. We hope that by facilitating access to information for grassroots, community-focused organizations, programming for children and families, as well as organizational development, is enhanced. Past editions of the Firelight Newsflash can be found on our website: <http://www.firelightfoundation.org/newsflash.htm>.

We welcome your comments, feedback and ideas for upcoming Newsflashes at newsletter@firelightfoundation.org.