

Firelight Newsflash! 22 March, 2010
Dear Friends,

Please enjoy this week's episode of the Newsflash!

Sincerely,
The Firelight Team

- Children's Symposium at International AIDS Conference: Family Support First
- OVC Program Evaluation Presentations Available with Audio
- Article: Scientists at AIDS meeting urge HIV prevention for long-term couples in Africa
- Opportunity to Participate in SIDA's International Training Programme on LGBT and Human Rights in Sweden
- See Me, Hear Me - A guide to using the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to promote the rights of children

Children's Symposium at International AIDS Conference: Family Support First

Vienna, Austria, 16-17 July 2010

Family Support First: Working Together to Achieve Universal Support and Access to Treatment is an international symposium that will present the latest evidence and share the latest models on family-centered care and services for children affected by HIV and AIDS. The underlying theme for the symposium is based on the findings of The Joint Learning Initiative on Children and AIDS which demonstrated how central and under-supported families are in their care of children affected by HIV and AIDS. The deadline for scholarships is 2 April and you can apply online.

To learn more, visit: www.teresagroup.ca/vienna

OVC Program Evaluation Presentations Available with Audio

MEASURE Evaluation organized a special event to present key findings and lessons learned from recent evaluations of OVC programs in East Africa, to discuss emerging issues and future directions for improvement of OVC programs, and to inform future OVC evaluations through consideration of additional informational needs and appropriate methodologies.

www.cpc.unc.edu/measure/program-areas/ovc/ovc-program-evaluation-presentations-available

Scientists at AIDS meeting urge HIV prevention for long-term couples in Africa
By David Brown Washington Post Staff Writer Thursday, February 18, 2010; A04

SAN FRANCISCO -- HIV continues to spread among couples in long-term relationships in sub-Saharan Africa because health authorities focus instead on the risks posed by casual sexual encounters, especially in young people. As a result, few HIV-prevention strategies have been devised for this overlooked population.

Those are among the conclusions reached by scientists presenting research at the 17th Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections, the annual mid-winter AIDS meeting in the United States. The failure to recognize how much HIV-transmission has occurred over decades in seemingly low-risk couples is "tragic," said epidemiologist Rebecca Bunnell of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, who worked in Uganda and Kenya for 14 years.

"It undoubtedly has resulted in millions of deaths and has produced millions of orphans," she told the more than 4,000 researchers gathered here.

Only as HIV testing has become more common in Africa in the past few years have health authorities come to appreciate the vast number of "discordant couples," in which one partner is HIV-positive and the other isn't.

For example, in the East African nation of Kenya, about 1 in 10 couples is affected by HIV. In 40 percent of those couples, both partners are infected. But in 60 percent -- about 340,000 couples -- only one partner is.

The likelihood that an infected person will pass the virus to a partner depends on many things. The risk decreases if the man is circumcised. Female-to-male transmission is less likely than male to female. In many cases, the infected partner in a discordant couple became infected before the current relationship or marriage began, and many HIV-affected couples remain discordant for years.

The problem is that most people do not know their HIV status. In particular, many people in stable relationships have never gone for testing because they perceive themselves to be at low risk for becoming infected.

A 2007 study that tested the blood of a representative sample of 16,000 Kenyans between the ages of 15 and 64 found that only 15 percent of infected people knew they had the virus. The fraction of HIV-affected couples in which partners know each other's status is even lower -- only 9 percent. In co-habiting couples, use of condoms, which could greatly lower the risk of transmitting the virus, is very low -- about 5 percent.

The consequence is that many of the continent's new infections occur among long-standing couples (albeit sometimes with the virus being introduced through an outside liaison). In Uganda, 65 percent of recent infections occur in married

people. Furthermore, when one partner in an HIV-affected couple dies, that often opens new chances that the virus will be passed to others. In Zimbabwe, 8 to 17 percent of new HIV infections are attributed to the sexual activity of widows or widowers.

Prevention campaigns that focus on couples and partner testing -- with a counselor present when the status of each is revealed -- are one strategy for addressing this problem. But that, in turn, could become a new impediment to testing, some experts say.

"The message has to be very carefully crafted," said Wafaa El-Sadr, an AIDS researcher at Columbia University who helps run prevention programs in 14 African countries. "You want to encourage people to come as couples, but you never want to turn anybody away just because they come alone."

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Opportunity to Participate in SIDA's International Training Programme on LGBT and Human Rights in Sweden

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) is supporting international travel, participation fee, meals and accommodation for participants interested to attend the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Persons (LGBT) and Human rights Training Programme to be held in two parts: Part 1 from 18 October 2010 to 5 November 2010 in Stockholm, Sweden and Part 2 from 30 May 2011 to 3 June 2011 in any one of the participating countries. The purpose of the programme is to equip participants with useful tools and perspectives for working for LGBT persons' human rights. "The training is administered by RFSU, The Swedish Association for Sexuality Education, in partnership with RFSL, The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights and will be conducted in English."

The contents of the programme are as follows:

Week 1: Sexualities, Norms and Genders
Week 2: Human Rights and Protection for LGBT Persons
Week 3: Supporting LGBT in Practice
Week 4: Regional follow-up

Within these themes there will be lectures, group discussions and workshops on: Perspectives on Sexualities and Gender, LGBT and the Right to Health, Violations of Human Rights, Religion and LGBT, Strategic Advocacy Work, Parliamentarians' and Politicians' Work for Change, Planning with LFA, Region Specific Challenges.

The training programme is only for candidates from African countries of Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Moçambique, Namibia, Rwanda,

South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. To apply to participate in the programme, candidates should have a minimum of three years of work experience either in LGBT or in the field of human rights in they should have an academic degree in social sciences, law, public health or related field of study. Besides, they should have equivalent knowledge obtained through similar experiences.

The last date to apply for programme is 9 April 2010. For more information, visit www.awid.org/eng/Women-in-Action/Calls-for-Participation2/Call-for-Applications-Sida-RFSU-LGBT-and-Human-Rights-International-Training-Programme.

See Me, Hear Me - A guide to using the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to promote the rights of children

Author: Gerison Lansdown, London: Save the Children, 2009.

This guide was prepared for child and disability rights advocates and civil society organisations for interpreting and implementing the rights of children with disabilities. It could also be used as a reference by governments. The guide provides an introduction to human rights, with a focus on the rights of the child with disabilities. It describes the development of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, explains its contents and suggests actions for advocacy.

www.crin.org/docs/See_me_hear_final.pdf

As part of the Firelight Foundation's Capacity Building 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.php>.

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