

ZIM Commemorates Global AIDS Week of Action, Draws Peoples Charter

By Simbiso Marimbe Marasha



Pastor Maxwel Kapachawo & Voice Moyo

Over 500 people living with HIV/AIDS converged at the Chitungwiza Town Centre near Harare and drew up a Zimbabwe Peoples' Charter on HIV/AIDS as they observed the Global AIDS Week of Action (GAWA). The week (20-26 May) is commemorated by HIV/AIDS campaigners annually since 2005 to deliberate on perspectives and priorities of people living with HIV/AIDS in countries across the globe; demand a stronger response, greater accountability and more resources in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The 2005 event was a landmark mobilisation platform before world leaders reported back to the United Nations on the progress they had made to meet their 2001 commitment on HIV/AIDS. In the same manner, this year's GAWA event presents an opportunity to demand international accountability from the G8 countries and demand them to fund the global fight against HIV/AIDS as they meet in Germany from June 6-8. Zimbabwe joins the world in demanding delivery of the 2005 promise by the world leaders on "developing and implementing a package for HIV prevention, treatment and care 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".



Afro-Jazz Musician, Victor Kunonga during the Zim- GAWA event

On May 23, The Zimbabwe Social Forum Secretariat, Utano Support Group and Mwelekeo wa NGO (MWENGO) gathered Zimbabwean Campaigners and people living with HIV/AIDS to deliberate on their experiences, challenges and expectations. The occasion was graced by prominent activists including Pastor Maxwel Kapachawo, Martha Tholana, Voice Moyo, Sebastian Chinhaire, Dudzai Medi and Tariro Chikwanha among others. Renowned Afro-Jazz musician Victor Kunonga and Gospel artist Pastor Stanley Gwanzura a.k.a Pastor G. assisted in officiating at the event. Other participants included representatives from UNAIDS, Action AID-Zimbabwe, MS-Zimbabwe, International Treatment Preparedness Coalition (ITPC), medical doctors, the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCDD) and members of the Zimbabwe Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (ZNPP+).

The Chitungwiza meeting was a mixture of joy and sorrow as participants shared testimonies of hope, of heartrending stigmatisation cases and challenges experienced at various levels of society as well as coping mechanisms that have failed in some cases and succeeded in others. The Candle Light Memorial ceremony was conducted for the Zimbabweans who died of HIV/AIDS was one such moving ceremony leaving most of the participants shedding tears as they remembered their beloved ones who lost their lives to the pandemic. Hundreds of names of the lost lives were recorded on four banners and

in a book of remembrance during the event and some of the names were read out as part of the Candle Light Memorial ceremony.

A key outcome of the event was the Zimbabwe specific Charter on HIV/AIDS which spelt out the challenges faced by Zimbabweans living with HIV/AIDs, their aspirations and their demands to the Government of Zimbabwe and the World at large. Below we publish the Zimbabwe Peoples Charter on HIV/AIDS as it was articulated on May 23 in Chitungwiza, Harare.

Zimbabwe People's HIV and AIDS Charter



We gather here today as Zimbabweans, as people living with HIV and AIDS – infected and affected and other concerned people as we join others all over the World in calling on our governments to speed up delivery of HIV and AIDS treatment to the millions who are dying without treatment. We are here to commemorate the Global Aids Week of Action under the auspices of Zimbabwe Social

Forum, Mwengo, Action Aid International and Utano Support Group as our host in Chitungwiza.

We have exchanged information on the HIV and AIDS issues, we have been moved by the testimonies, poetry, presentations and drama representation of the many crises and many forms of suffering of our people particularly women and children.

We note with deep concern that the critical observations made in the People's Convention and in many other similar meetings continue to hold true. And the important recommendations they have made have not been reflected in sound progress on these and other urgent matters.

We are deeply concerned that access to HIV and AIDS has expanded over the last three years but at a rate that means millions of people will die for lack of access to life saving care. There are many disturbing signs that the momentum of the "3 by 5" campaign has been lost, and that HIV and AIDS treatment scale up effort is stagnating

- o Only 35 of over 100 countries have developed costed national plans for key HIV and AIDS interventions. Although many countries committed themselves to setting targets by the end of 2006, many targets are still awaiting formal endorsements by national authorities.
- o The G8 countries have not adequately honoured their 2005 Gleneagles commitments to universal access to treatment, prevention and care
- o Some HIV and AIDS policy makers and advocates are pitting treatment and prevention against each other, failing to recognize that only a comprehensive response that integrates treatment, prevention and care, will reverse the pandemic.

We are demanding that our Government of Zimbabwe, International Donors and Institutions take immediate action to accelerate HIV and AIDS treatment delivery, using this effort to build stronger health systems that also provide HIV and AIDS prevention, TB diagnosis and treatment and other services

Global Demands

- o The World Health Organisation (WHO) must review the treatment scale-up targets and plans, ensure that they are realistic, and declare a single unified global target for universal access to treatment by 2010
- o The G8 must deliver a funding plan for their commitment to universal access to HIV and AIDS treatment, prevention and care at their meeting in Germany in June 2007. G8 countries must fill the US\$8 – 10billion annual Global Fund, funding gap and ensure full predictable funding.
- o Multilateral, bilateral and private funders to ensure that WHO has the resources to fulfil its mission and leadership role on HIV and AIDS.
- o Pharmaceutical companies- including Abbott and Novartis must STOP threatening governments that seek to produce generic drugs in an effort to prevent their citizens from accessing life saving medicines
- o A Universal Access Strategic Planning and Monitoring Group must be set up as a standing committee of WHO UNAIDS, the Global Fund, and PEPFAR, the G8, People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) Networks, treatment activists and organizations representing key populations. It should hold its first meeting by December 1 2007.
- o Working with its partners, WHO must develop
 - A robust plan on access to second line drugs
 - A system to gather lessons learned in scale up and rapidly share them to advance program operations
 - Improved technical support to countries to ensure Global Fund and other programmes work, and
 - A fully operational human resources effort through the “Treat, Train and Retain” programme that shows concentrate outcomes in the near future

Domestic demands

- o Zimbabwe must submit its fully-costed Universal Access Plan, including yearly targets and budgets by July 30 2007
- o There must be an end to corruption and politicization of HIV and AIDS funds as some of the PLWHA are being denied access due to their political affiliation
- o An end to stigma and discrimination, equal employment opportunities need to be implemented and that discrimination especially for PLWHA, women and the disabled should be ended at all levels of society.
- o A call for the management of the AIDS Levy, Global Fund to be entrusted to people living with HIV and AIDS.
- o Accountability and transparency in the disbursement of the Aids Levy and Global Funds
- o Donor countries should remove conditional ties and should research on local conditions so that their programmes suit the intended beneficiaries.

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