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## Dwindling global HIV funding entails crisis in Africa by Natasha Msonza

Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) in August conducted a knowledge brief with the media on the far-reaching consequences of perceived donor fatigue in funding HIV programmes. The brief, organized by the Humanitarian Information Facilitation Centre (HIFC) investigated early signs of donor retreat and discussed the other factors related to this.

The main issues discussed included the fact that HIV is the leading cause of death in Africa. The perceived worrisome donor fatigue is set to worsen the situation for an already vulnerable population.

A number of donors have been cited as evidently flat lining funding and backtracking on commitments to scale up support as HIV care deteriorates. Among them are PEPFAR (for no increase in ARV treatment 2010 onwards), The World Bank, UNITAID (for actual shortage of PMTCT and 2<sup>nd</sup> line ARVs drugs as there is no hand-over plan) and Global Fund (for Round 10 uncertainty) have been cited as evidently flat lining. Because of the uncertainty of donor funding, new patients cannot be enrolled for treatment, a thing that threatens to undermine all the positive effects felt so far and widen the treatment gap in Sub-Saharan Africa.

*“Media have critical advocacy role to play”*



Editors and senior journalists participate in MSF brief

Donor fatigue also entails a delay in the implementation of the latest WHO guidelines calling for a move away from substandard care and giving patients benefits of earlier treatment. It also means pressure remains on smaller AIDS Service Organizations (ASOs) to the point that resources end up stretched too thinly, which will affect real progress.

Speaking at the brief, MSF Head of Mission, Fasil Tezera encouraged media to partake in the campaign to raise awareness of the public and sensitize of the challenges this donor retreat is likely to present, especially to those already on treatment.

He highlighted the need for concerted effort in advocacy in the hope that a number of donors might increase commitment to seeing this fight through. The media play a critical advocacy role in ensuring that lobbying and public pressure necessary to reverse these challenges are realized in the face of a potentially desperate situation.

### The HIFC Update

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## HIV&AIDS reporting gets boost from PEPFAR by Leonissah Munjoma

Media coverage of HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwe is set to reach new heights following the awarding of 11 financial grants to Zimbabwean journalists to facilitate in-depth writing of stories on one of human kind's worst health challenges. The journalists – coming from a cross section of media houses in Zimbabwe including private and state-controlled newspapers – are expected to cover a wide range of issues around HIV and AIDS.

The HIFC received financial support amounting to \$10 000 from the United States President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) small grants to undertake a media grants and mentoring programme with focus on HIV and AIDS reporting between June and October. The grant is being rolled out from HIFC's Media Grants and Mentorship programme.

Prior to the roll-out of grants, HIFC conducted a consultative meeting that brought together stakeholders from AIDS Service

Organizations (ASOs) working in that sector to identify and discuss pertinent issues around HIV and AIDS that they felt were being neglected and underreported.

Issues arising from this meeting informed thematic areas around which the 11 grantees were to write about. The journalists have already started working on their various stories with guidance from their mentors, who are seasoned editors. The stories are expected to increase awareness and dialogue around the subject as well as contribute to behaviour change efforts.

ASOs present at the consultative meeting included SAFAIDS, Women and AIDS Support Network (WASN), The Centre, Zimbabwe AIDS Network (ZAN), National AIDS Council (NAC) and the Zimbabwe National Network of People living with HIV/AIDS (ZNNP+). They identified the following key issues for media, among others:

- NGO accountability of HIV/AIDS funds for programmes and the role of media as watchdog to check misappropriation.
- Home-based care versus capacity of relatives to cope; home support system not has not been fully analysed to gauge its capacity. In the case of sick adults, children bear the brunt of care-giving.
- Welfare of orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) and lack of attention to their grieving processes, effects of sibling separation and stigma in school especially for HIV positive teenagers.
- Infected children – The media need to highlight issues around acceptance, testing, support, revealing of status and education for infected and affected children.
- HIV and AIDS education in schools – tends to stigmatise the infected and affected as having had multiple sexual partners) – yet there are young adults who were infected at birth.
- HIV and AIDS maternal mortality - leading cause of death in pregnant women. Media should raise awareness on the preventability of this by ensuring women get tested and make informed choices before having children.
- Access to ARVs – many angles including ignorance among those not on ARVs who are buying them on the black market and using them for selfish reasons. The issue of resistance should also be explored.
- Role of nutritional supplements – in some circles these are mistaken for curable medicines, yet all they do is help boost immunity. The value of supplements and their difference from ARVs need to be explained clearly.



Selection panel reviews PEPFAR grant applications



## Negotiating space for the humanitarian story by Chris Msipa

Harare – The Zimbabwean media have for the past decade been absorbed in political tensions that have caused the nation to witness serious erosion of journalistic standards and neglect of news about the welfare of people.

The *humanitarian* story has had little or no space in the media as journalists put higher preference to the ‘hot news’ (which are often political) instead of for the slower, more philanthropic story.

The birth of the Humanitarian Information Facilitation Centre (HIFC) in early 2009 was necessitated by this dearth of critical humanitarian information that was not reaching the public domain. The organization’s objectives to stir up passion for the humanitarian story among journalists, bridge the gap between news-people and humanitarian groups as well as equip humanitarian organizations with effective information packaging and dissemination skills have recently seen a marked increase in the quality and quantity of human interest stories in the media.

Part of HIFC’s programming includes conducting training for scribes participating in its Media Grant and Mentorship Programme. The latest of such was a two-day workshop that took place recently in the capital, Harare. Conducted by global news agency - Reuters’ Southern Africa Editor, Cris Chinaka, the workshop aimed to sharpen the skills of journalists in identifying, researching and packaging humanitarian feature stories.

The basics of feature writing were revisited and expanded and as the saying goes, looking for story ideas is not anyone’s cup of tea. This is an area that gives many reporters headaches and the workshop sought to address this.

In the training, journalists were challenged to ask themselves at least five questions when faced with the task: think of where to get the story ideas, look at what is happening, what is not happening, what should be happening, what could happen, what will it all mean to the people directly and indirectly affected?

Participants discussed vital aspects of handling features: keeping in mind one’s own emotions,

noticing the scene, smells and the sounds in the surroundings; thinking of the processes involved and finding out who to ‘hang’ in the story. Journalists were cautioned against the tendency to use statistics authoritatively instead of stating where they got their figures. They were warned against such practices to avoid the danger of being blamed for circulating wrong data.

*“No matter how good an idea a journalist may have, it is useless until he or she can sell it successfully to the editor”*

Emphasis was also put on pitch presentation. The session on pitching aimed to solve the problem of “stammering”. No matter how good an idea a journalist may have, it is useless until he or she can sell it successfully to the editor.

Ideas generated during the workshop formed a starting point for story pitching for the Grant and Mentorship Programme. Following the workshop, the quality of pitches landing on the HIFC Media Desk has improved, demonstrating marked success in the organisation’s efforts to improve humanitarian news coverage in the country.



Journalists discussing during group work session

## HIFC to map early childhood development in Zimbabwe

By *Tafadzwa Chimbodza*

There are times when organizations engage in interactions but never envisage the outcome of such engagements - the collaboration between HIFC and OSISA is a classic example of such.

Sometime in April this year, Rum-bidzai Bara and myself attended a meeting convened by Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) focusing on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Zimbabwe. The meeting brought together stakeholders involved in ECCE for the first time in a long time. It was an opportunity for participants to discuss their work in this vital sector and get ideas of where organizations are placed in terms of activities they are engaged in.

Prior to the meeting, HIFC had been conducting research on the education sector and disseminating key information other stakeholders and the media. During this meeting, it was realized that a mapping exercise on ECCE needed to be undertaken. We saw this amazing opportunity and quickly seized it, positioning ourselves as a strategic partner who would facilitate the research process.

We later met with the OSISA Education Programme manager, Sherri Le Motte to set the ball rolling. The meeting brought both parties up to speed on the expectations of each.

HIFC was further invited to participate in a regional retreat for researchers from Southern Africa set to be hosted in Zambia, which we attended in Lusaka, a little nervous and also very excited. For first time flyers, the experience was wonderful despite periodic thoughts of what-ifs and after 45 minutes we landed safely at Lusaka International Airport.

We went through the painstaking immigration procedures and after one and a half hours we were done. Just when we were trying to figure out what next to do, we bumped into Sherri Le Motte who briefly introduced us to the team comprising ECD researchers who had come for the retreat as well. We proceeded straight to Lilayi Lodge, a 45-minute drive from Lusaka Airport. On the way we passed through the CBD, which by my observation is a city under construction. An outstanding feature is the good road surfaces and no potholes what so ever, it was impressive.

Lilayi Lodge provided the ideal setting for a relaxed stay. Set in a 700-hectare game ranch, the lodge offers comfortable accommodation close to Zambia's capital city. The first night was chilly but there was wine and snacks to warm us up to a Zambian night under bright stars.

Next morning, the seminar began in earnest and day one was set-aside for researchers from the region to share their findings.

Mozambique, Zambia, Swaziland, Angola and Zimbabwe took turns to make presentations and engage in dialogue on methodology and validity of the researches. These were rich sessions that helped streamline the researches to the objectives set by OSISA.

Zimbabwe, being the new kid on the block rose to the occasion and made an impressive presentation whose main focus gave a contextual background in the education sector, and a Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis of the country in relation to ECCE.

The first day was intense and a great deal of ground was covered, so the suggestion of a late after-

noon walk with a guide was a welcome break from the day's proceedings.

Day two focused on strengthening relations and ironing out outstanding issues. For us, we had to meet with Sherri and discuss the exact nature of the research HIFC had to facilitate around the theme of ECCE. Sherri pointed out that OSISA required more of a mapping exercise to ascertain the players in the ECCE sector in Zimbabwe, the legislative framework around Early Childhood Development and the actual implementation of ECCE activities in Zimbabwe. Sherri expressed confidence that in September when the teams reconvene in Mozambique, Zimbabwe would have made strides in its research, enough for the Zimbabwean team to make a presentation.

### *Heads Up!*

HIFC is excited about the Nokia Data Gathering (NDG) project set to take off shortly, as most preparations are now in place. The NDG is set to revolutionize field data collection processes of non-governmental organizations through enabling near real time research and analysis.

HIFC has forged exciting new relations as more humanitarian organizations partner the organization in expanding the humanitarian story.

The number of journalists joining the Grants and Mentorship programme keeps growing, which has seen a subsequent rise in quality and quantity of humanitarian stories in the media.

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