



AFRICA UNITED AGAINST CHILDHOOD AIDS

MEDIA RELEASE



African leaders join forces to help end AIDS in children by 2030 **OAFLA and the African Union launch the 'Free To Shine' campaign that aims to help prevent new HIV infections and childhood deaths**



Addis Ababa, 29th January 2018. The Organisation of African First Ladies Against HIV/AIDS (OAFLA) and the African Union have today launched 'Free To Shine', a new campaign that aims to help end childhood AIDS in Africa by 2030 and keep mothers healthy. The campaign, launched during the OAFLA General Assembly, will unite people and organisations at local and global levels to advance healthcare delivery that will contribute to ending childhood AIDS. To achieve its goal, the campaign will first focus on 2020 global targets for the elimination of mother to child transmission as outlined in the African Union's Catalytic Framework to end AIDS, TB and Eliminate Malaria in Africa by 2030. These targets are aligned to global targets and commitments.

"While Africa has made unprecedented progress in responding to the AIDS epidemic, the response to childhood AIDS is lagging behind. To end the AIDS epidemic in Africa, we must act now to prioritise the use of knowledge and the implementation of tools that exist, to keep children AIDS-free and their mothers healthy. Preventing new HIV infections will transform Africa's broader health and development agenda and provide our children with a healthy and hopeful future," said Her Excellency Mrs Roman Tesfaye, First Lady of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and President of OAFLA.

There are up to 1.4 million children living with HIV in Africa south of the Sahara – this is over half of all children living with HIV globally.^{1,2} Children are at greater risk of the potentially fatal consequences of



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HIV than any other age group.¹ Despite this, detection and treatment levels remain low.^{1,3} Of the total number of children living with HIV, around 50% are not receiving treatment,^{1,4} and of these untreated children 50% die before they are 2 years old.⁵

“We cannot end AIDS by 2030 if we do not focus on women and children. The Free To Shine campaign will drive for increased investments to strengthen health systems and achieve maximum impact where the burden is highest. The African Union is committed to ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030, which will lay a strong foundation for Africa’s Agenda 2063 for socio-economic development and structural transformation,” said Dr. Marie-Goretti Harakeye, the Head of Division for AIDS, TB, Malaria and Other Infectious Diseases at the African Union Commission.

The campaign aims to unite people and organisations from local to global levels, and support personal and collective understanding of the actions that can be taken to end childhood AIDS. The campaign will work to drive the effective delivery and use of healthcare services to keep mothers healthy, prevent mother to child transmission and ensure fast and effective identification and treatment of children infected by HIV.

The leading partners in the Free To Shine campaign have set out their campaign objectives as:

- To improve maternal and childhood AIDS programmes across Africa by building networks and partnerships of key organisations and advocate for domestic and global resource mobilisation
- To raise awareness of the childhood AIDS cycle of risk in Africa through mass media, publications, websites, meetings and other means
- To mobilise support for childhood AIDS programmes in Africa by working with high-level international forums such as UN General Assembly and its special sessions, G7 and G20 Summits and advocacy missions
- To inform AU governance structures such as the Permanent Representatives Council, the Executive Council and the Assembly, AU Organs (Pan-African Parliament, NEPAD and APRM) and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) & Regional Health Organisations (RHOs) on key issues related to childhood AIDS

For more information about the campaign, please visit www.freetoshineafrica.org or follow us on Twitter at @Free_To_Shine and Facebook at @FreeToShineAfrica.

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Notes to Editors

About the 'Free To Shine' Campaign

'Free To Shine' is a campaign to help end childhood AIDS in Africa by 2030 and keep mothers healthy. Launched in January 2018 the campaign is led by OAFLA and the AU, with support from partners WHO, UNAIDS, Abbott, EGPAF, UNICEF, UNDP and AIDS Accountability International.

For more information about the 'Free To Shine' Campaign visit www.freetoshineafrica.org.

About Organisation of African First Ladies Against HIV/AIDS

Established in 2002 OAFLA brings together African First Ladies and various partners committed to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030. OAFLA provides continent wide leadership advocating for policy and social change, engage in resource mobilisation efforts from the global, continental and national levels. Through First Ladies and other champions OAFLA drives action in the grassroots communities working with Africa's most vulnerable including women and children infected and affected by the AIDS epidemic who also bear the brunt of poverty and social marginalisation.

For more information about the Organisation of African First Ladies Against HIV/AIDS (OAFLA) visit: www.oafla.org

About the African Union

The African Union spearheads Africa's development and integration in close collaboration with African Union Member States, the Regional Economic Communities and African citizens. AU Vision: to accelerate progress towards an integrated, prosperous and inclusive Africa, at peace with itself, playing a dynamic role in the continental and global arena, effectively driven by an accountable, efficient and responsive Commission.

For more information about the African Union visit: www.au.int

Details of the African Union's Catalytic Framework available [here](#).

Details of UNAIDS 'Start Free, Stay Free, AIDS Free' available [here](#).



References:

1. UNAIDS. On the fast-track to an AIDS-free generation. 2016. Available: http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/GlobalPlan2016_en.pdf
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3. UNAIDS. Ending AIDS. Progress towards the 90-90-90 targets. Global AIDS Update 2017. 2017 Available: http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/Global_AIDS_update_2017_en.pdf



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4. UNICEF. Executive Summary. For every child end AIDS. Seventh Stocktaking Report, 2016. Available: <https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/For-Every-Child-End-AIDS-ST7-2016-Executive-Summary.pdf>

5. Newell, ML et al. Mortality of Infected and Uninfected Infants Born to HIV-Infected Mothers in Africa: A pooled analysis. The Lancet. 2004,364:1236–1243. Available: [http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(04\)17140-7.pdf](http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(04)17140-7.pdf)

Partner Statements

UNAIDS

“All countries should eliminate Mother to Child Transmission of HIV and Syphilis and ensure that every child has an HIV-free start to his or her life.”

Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS

Abbott

“As a global leader in diagnostics, Abbott strongly supports the important work of the First Ladies of Africa, African Union and partners, to mobilize resources and accelerate the fight to end AIDS in children by 2030. Early infant diagnosis that can be provided quickly and at the point of care – often in remote, resource-limited locations – is a critical intervention to prevent HIV infected infants from developing AIDS and allowing them to live long, healthy and productive lives.”

Zeina Henaine, Social Responsibility Ambassador, Africa and Senior Regional Director for North and French Africa

EGPAF

“The ‘Free to Shine’ campaign is an important step in catalyzing action among government and community leaders towards ending AIDS among an underserved and often forgotten population – children. EGPAF shares the campaign’s mission to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV, so infants can be born and stay free of the virus. It is critical to ensure both mothers and children with HIV have access to the lifesaving medicines they need to live healthy productive lives and achieve their dreams. This campaign will be a game changer on the African continent by prioritizing and accelerating the pace towards achieving an AIDS-free generation.”

Chip Lyons, President and CEO of the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation

UNICEF

“We have seen tremendous progress in preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV, but the ultimate success requires continued and scaled up investment, political will and sustained service delivery. Collective effort to achieve an HIV-free generation is required now, more than ever before.”

Leila Pakkala, UNICEF Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa