



AFRICA UNITED AGAINST CHILDHOOD AIDS



MEDIA RELEASE

African states urged to accelerate efforts towards achieving HIV testing and treatment goals required to end childhood AIDS in Africa by 2030

African Union and Organisation of African First Ladies Against HIV/AIDS call for immediate prioritisation of accessible health services tailored to the needs of children with or at risk of HIV

Addis Ababa, Embargoed until 15th June 2018. Tomorrow on the International Day of the African Child, the Free To Shine campaign, led by the African Union (AU) and the Organisation of African First Ladies Against HIV/AIDS (OAFLA), is calling for the prioritisation of services to prevent, identify and treat HIV in children.

Africa has achieved considerable success in the fight against HIV and AIDS. However, data in the new [Free To Shine Africa Interactive Map](#) highlights that children at risk of and infected with HIV have been left behind in Africa's progress and they need to be prioritised as a matter of urgency. OAFLA and the African Union are leading the Free To Shine campaign to provide continental leadership to address this issue.

The call to action stems from data showing that the levels of care currently provided across African states will not be adequate to end childhood AIDS by 2030, a target that the African Union committed to in the Catalytic Framework to end AIDS, TB and Eliminate Malaria in Africa By 2030. Only one country (Algeria) out of 55 countries is on target to deliver adequate rates of antiretroviral therapy (ART) for children infected with HIV, and only three countries (Rwanda, South Africa and eSwatini) are on track to meet World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines on testing infants born to mothers with HIV within two months of birth. Despite encouraging rates of antiretroviral therapy provision for pregnant women with HIV, only six countries (Botswana, Namibia, eSwatini, Uganda, South Africa, Cape Verde) are on target to achieving a final mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) rate of less than 5% by 2020.¹

“We need to ensure that children who have or are at risk of HIV are not left behind. Not only must we protect the rights of every individual child in Africa, but we must also ensure Africa's continued and sustainable development. A foundation for achieving this is the health and wellbeing of all children, so that they can live active and fulfilling lives, making valuable contributions towards the future success of our nations,” said Dr. Marie-Goretti Harakeye, the Head of Division for AIDS, TB, Malaria and Other Infectious Diseases at the African Union Commission.

About the Free To Shine Campaign

The Free To Shine campaign was launched in January 2018 and aims to help end childhood AIDS in Africa by 2030 and keep mothers healthy. To drive the changes required to achieve this goal, the Free To Shine campaign is working to:

- Raise awareness of the HIV epidemic in children and the need to prioritise children and mothers;
- Increase understanding of how to prevent HIV and AIDS in childhood by keeping mothers healthy;
- Prioritise delivery of effective and sustainable HIV and AIDS health services to all who need them;
- Highlight the need to remove barriers preventing women and mothers engaging with health services.



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To measure progress towards achieving this goal, Free To Shine campaign partner WHO has identified six measures of healthcare provision that are key to ending childhood AIDS and defined interim targets for each.

Key Indicators of Progress	2020 Target	No. of African States Achieved/On-Track (Total of 47 States Reported On)
Estimated percentage of pregnant women living with HIV who received antiretrovirals for prevention of mother-to-child transmission.	95%	22 (47%)
Final mother-to-child transmission rate including the breastfeeding period.	<5%	6 (13%)
Percentage of infants born to women living with HIV receiving a virological test within two months of birth i.e. early infant diagnosis.	90%	3 (6%)
Estimated antiretroviral therapy coverage in children aged 0 to 14 years.	90%	1 (2%)
Percentage of antenatal care (ANC) attendees tested for syphilis at first ANC visit.	95%	13 (28%)
Percentage of antenatal care attendees positive for syphilis who received treatment.	95%	20 (43%)

The complete data can be accessed via the [Free To Shine Africa Interactive Map](#).

The Importance of Prioritising Children in the Fight Against HIV and AIDS

Children account for half of Africa's population of an estimated 1.2 billion people. Free To Shine campaign partner UNICEF says that almost 2 billion babies will be born in Africa within 35 years, and that by the middle of the century nearly 40% of the world's children will live in Africa.²

Africa has made great progress in the overall fight against HIV and AIDS. Between 2010 and 2015, the largest reduction in new adult HIV infections and the greatest improvement in the proportion of HIV infected individuals being treated were achieved in Eastern and Southern Africa.³ However, 21 of the 23 countries with the highest numbers of new HIV infections in children, adolescents and young women are in Africa, mostly south of the Sahara. Fifty per cent of children born with HIV will die before they are 2 years old if they do not receive treatment.⁴

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

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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.

About the Organisation of African First Ladies Against HIV/AIDS

Established in 2002 the Organisation of African First Ladies Against HIV/AIDS (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, engaging 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 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

References:

¹ World Health Organisation. HIV country profiles. 2016. Available: <http://www.who.int/hiv/data/profiles/en/>

² UNICEF. Generation 2030. 2014. Available: https://www.unicef.org/publications/index_74751.html

³ UNAIDS. Global AIDS Update. 2016. Available: http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/global-AIDS-update-2016_en.pdf

⁴ UNAIDS. Start Free, Stay Free, AIDS Free. 2017. Available:

https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/JC2923_SFSAF_2017progressreport_en.pdf