



Global Campaign News – Issue #43 October 15, 2004

Welcome to the biweekly *Global Campaign News*! The *Global Campaign News* is a forum for international exchange on microbicide activities and information with an aim to build a more informed and integrated movement for microbicide development and other prevention options against HIV and STDs. This and previous issues of GC News are available online at <http://www.global-campaign.org/gcnews.htm>

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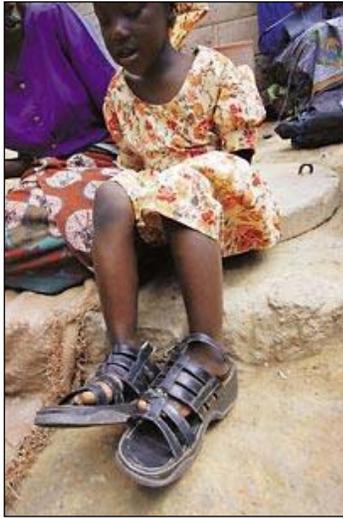
On September 30th, a leader in global microbicides advocacy efforts, International Family Health (IFH), shut its doors for the last time, drawing to a close 14 years of programming and projects on reproductive health. Its loss to the microbicide advocacy movement will be widely felt, not only within Europe, but also especially in Uganda, Ghana, South Africa and Thailand, where IFH has worked closely with the Global Campaign to initiate and strengthen local advocacy efforts over the past 3 years.

IFH was established in 1991 as a UK charity dedicated to the sexual and reproductive health and rights of disadvantaged people in resource-poor settings. Over the years the organisation developed a reputation for innovative approaches and for successfully integrating sexual and reproductive health and HIV in developing countries. IFH's pioneering work on microbicides began in 1991, when they brought together a group of researchers studying 'virucides' in collaboration with the Margaret Pike Centre and the University of East Anglia. In 2000 IFH published the 'Case for Microbicides' with the Population Council and microbicides grew into a major element of the organisations' profile. In 2002, the European Commission funded a three-year global microbicides advocacy and networking project, an initiative that opened the door for microbicide mobilization in Europe and spurred forward efforts already underway in the Global South. Unfortunately in 2004, funding realities for reproductive health and development hit home and IFH was one of several small international NGOs that bore the brunt.

Since the closure was announced, staff has worked intensively to ensure that its outstanding projects could be transferred to likeminded organisations. IFH's microbicides advocacy work, funded by the European Commission and the British Department for International Development (DFID), will be transferred to the Global Campaign. The European arm of the project will continue to be managed by Rebekah Webb in Brussels, while Megan Gottemoeller will oversee the continuation of advocacy efforts in Africa and Asia.

To ensure the continued dissemination of IFH's work on sexual and reproductive health and rights, the website has been maintained so partners, colleagues and advocates can access and utilise the rich resource materials produced over the last fourteen years. To access key microbicide publications and the closure statement, please go to: www.ifh.org.uk.

Launch of Giving Women Power Over AIDS Exhibit in Philadelphia North America



The Global Campaign for Microbicides is pleased to announce the launch of a traveling photo exhibit – Giving Women Power Over AIDS. For those of you in the Philadelphia area, please join the Pennsylvania Campaign for Microbicides and its local partners in the launch of this traveling exhibit that features In Her Mother's Shoes, an award-winning photo essay by The Seattle Times.

This exhibit tells the story of Martha, one of some 11 million AIDS orphans in sub-Saharan Africa, and her mother Ruth. The story is coupled with an education campaign to raise awareness and support for microbicide research and global AIDS funding. The walk through exhibit incorporates photography and language from the original newspaper piece as well as information and images that represent women's vulnerability, the global AIDS pandemic and microbicides development. The exhibit is tied together with powerful quotations, music, materials and artifacts aimed at telling the story of why microbicides would be a critical new tool for addressing the HIV pandemic. Giving Women Power Over AIDS puts a face to the numbing statistics that are AIDS, and tells you how you can be a part of the solution.

The first three viewings will be in Philadelphia in the next month:

- Thursday, October 28, 2004, Evening Reception: 5:30pm to 8:30 pm. Guest Speakers: 6:30pm. International House of Philadelphia, 3701 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia.
- Friday, November 5, 2004, First Friday Art Walk: 10am to 10pm. Christ Church Neighborhood House, Second Street above Market Street, Philadelphia.
- Saturday, November 6, 2004, Open House: 10am to 5pm. Christ Church Neighborhood House, Second Street above Market Street, Philadelphia.

From now until December 2005, the Giving Women Power Over AIDS exhibit will travel to Philadelphia, Seattle, Sacramento, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Chicago, New Haven, Hartford, New York City, and Boston. In each city, Global Campaign affiliates will host events in museums, libraries, shopping malls, universities, state capitol buildings, and community centers to engage community leaders, policy makers, local journalists, and the general public.

This exhibition is sponsored by the Global Campaign for Microbicides with funding from the United States Agency for International Development. To learn more, go to <http://www.global-campaign.org/gwpoa.htm>

Microbicides at the U.S. Conference on AIDS North America

Organized by the National Minority AIDS Council every year, the U.S. Conference on AIDS (USCA) will take place in Philadelphia next week from October 21-24 and bring together 3,000 to 4,000 community-based organizations, corporate partners, health agencies, service providers, HIV/AIDS advocates and educators and people living with HIV/AIDS. This is the largest AIDS-related gathering in the United States, in search of the latest tools and solutions for the challenges posed by HIV/AIDS. For more information about the conference, go to www.nmac.org

The Global Campaign for Microbicides and its affiliates will have a strong presence at USCA including several presentations:

- Bindhya Patel, Global Campaign for Microbicides, will present "Microbicides: What, Where, Who, When" at the Institute on Women and HIV/AIDS on Thursday, October 21 at 1:30pm
- Fiona Kyck, Pennsylvania Campaign for Microbicides will present "Microbicides: Women, Power, and the Need for Prevention Options" on Saturday, October 23 at 1:45pm

- Guy Pujol, AIDS Treatment Initiative and Georgia Campaign for Microbicides, will present "An Update on Nonoxonyl-9" at a roundtable workshop on Saturday, October 23 at 1:45pm
- Kerri Barthel, Pennsylvania Campaign for Microbicides, will present "When ABC Isn't Enough: More Prevention Options for Receptive Partners" on Sunday, October 24, at 9:30am

If you are at the conference, please join us at these workshops!

Join us in launching our new film on World AIDS Day Global

This year, the Global Campaign for Microbicides invites its grassroots sites and partners to help us in launching our new film, *In Women's Hands*, on World AIDS Day, December 1, 2004. It is our goal to have more than ten events around the world during the week of World AIDS Day at which people are gathering to view the film, learn more about microbicides, and get a chance to talk about how microbicides could really make a difference in the AIDS epidemic.

This year, UNAIDS has declared the theme of this World AIDS Day to be women, girls, HIV and AIDS, so it is even more appropriate for microbicides advocates to use this day to highlight the need for new user-controlled HIV prevention options. In addition, the theme of this year's 16 days of Activism against Gender Violence (Nov 25 – Dec 10) highlights the intersection of violence against women and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The co-occurrence of the 16 days campaign and World AIDS Day is an excellent opportunity to partner with domestic violence organizations and recognize how microbicides could offer women in abusive relationships an additional tool with which to protect themselves.

A 10-minute version and a 25-minute version of *In Women's Hands* will be made available in mid-November 2004 for those partners who wish to join us in our worldwide launch. We encourage you to use the short version of the film in pre-existing World AIDS Day programs or collaborate with partners and organize your own World AIDS Day events such as:

- Theater screenings during community theater nights
- Campus screenings in an auditorium or lecture hall at colleges and universities
- House parties (we can give you more information about how to organize these)
- Community or agency-based events in agency/NGO venues, churches, or other community gathering spaces
- Events including donors and/or policy makers (e.g., at a local conference center or a theater)

The Global Campaign will be providing copies of the film, presentations, invitation letters, and guides to planning events for those of you who are interested in participating in this worldwide launch. If you are interested in receiving more information about organizing World AIDS Day events, please contact us! We will be happy to talk to you more about the film, brainstorm ideas for events, and offer technical assistance as you move forward.

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If you can't help out with this launch, please check back on our website in November to order copies of the film after World AIDS Day.

U.S. debate highlight need for more attention on women and AIDS North America

Column by Lenore Skenazy; Originally published in New York Daily News – October 12, 2004

Editor's Note: The following column, entitled "Pols ignore crisis among black women" originally appeared in the New York Daily News and is included here in its entirety with the author's permission. The columnist writes in response to a question posed at the United States Vice-Presidential debates on Tuesday, October 4th in which the two vice-presidential candidates (current Vice President Dick Cheney and candidate Senator John Edwards) were asked about high rates of AIDS in African American women. Neither candidate was able to respond directly to the

question about AIDS in the United States. Talata Reeves, who is quoted in this editorial, has served as the co-coordinator of the Global Campaign affiliate, the New York Microbicides Working Group.

Pols ignore crisis among black women – by Lenore Skenazy

Okay, here's the *one* national security question I would ask tonight. Actually, Gwen Ifill already asked it in the vice presidential debate. But since both candidates completely ducked, here goes:

What do you propose to do about the fact that black women are 13 times more likely to die of AIDS than their white counterparts?

Whoa! Who brings up black women in a big-time debate? That, unfortunately, is exactly what it looked like the candidates were thinking as Vice President Cheney harrumphed that he was "not aware that it was that severe an epidemic" and John Edwards switched topics.

But when we talk about AIDS in America, we *are* talking about national security. This year alone, 40,000 Americans will become infected with HIV. Of these, 50% will be black. And, increasingly, those blacks will be women - most of them poor.

Isn't preventing the deaths of innocent Americans exactly what national security is all about? If we were talking about 40,000 Americans being exposed to anthrax, do you really suppose that neither candidate would have bothered to prepare a sound bite?

The first thing the candidates might want to do is find out why so many African-American women are getting AIDS. Naturally, there are several factors. The one getting the most publicity is black men on the "down low" - men living with women but seeing boyfriends on the side.

But that is not the real problem, according to most AIDS organizations. Men coming home from prison is a much bigger deal. Fully 95% of American prisons do not provide condoms. Nonetheless, an estimated 65% of male inmates - even the straight ones - have sex. So much for good behavior. When they get out, they spread the diseases they picked up to women as well as men. So, clearly, we need condoms in prison.

An even bigger problem, says Talata Reeves, director of women's and family services for New York's Gay Men's Health Crisis, is that there is still no AIDS prevention tool that a woman can use that does not require the consent of a man. Right now, if a woman suggests a condom, often her partner thinks she doesn't trust him or that she has been fooling around. But if there were a microbicide - a virus-killing medicine women could use like a spermicide - a lot more women could discreetly protect themselves. Alas, says Reeves, microbicide research has been "woefully underfunded" by an administration more intent on pushing abstinence and marriage.

Too often, notes Reeves, poor women cannot insist on either of those options. "If you don't have an income and he does, or if you don't have another way of feeding your children, or if you are an immigrant and undocumented," it is harder to demand anything - be it condom use or marriage - from a partner.

The economic realities of poor women - many of them black - make them vulnerable to their partners and, apparently, invisible to politicians. Chalk up another security crisis brewing right under our leaders' noses.

Unproven Claims Watch: Amphora Global

On September 9, BusinessWire reported that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had approved the distribution of a sexual lubricant product called Amphora by Instead, Inc. Although Amphora is only being marketed as a lubricant at this point, representatives of the San Diego-based firm said that the product has been shown (in pre-clinical and early clinical testing) to immobilize sperm for up to eight hours and, in the test tube, to inactivate the pathogens causing gonorrhea, herpes, chlamydia, and HIV.

“In marketing Amphora lubricant, we urge the company to be very clear about the fact that we do not yet know whether the product works as a microbicide or not,” said Lori Heise, director of the Global Campaign for Microbicides.

“Some of the press generated by this FDA decision described Amphora as a ‘patented microbicidal and spermicidal gel’”, she added. “This could be problematic if the average reader interprets it to mean that Amphora lubricant has been proven effective as a microbicide. Since we don’t yet know whether Amphora works as a microbicide or not, it should be clearly and unambiguously marketed as a lubricant only until conclusive data to support other claims are available”, Heise concluded.

This product also made the news in July 2003, when the Russian Academy of Medical Sciences authorized Instead to start marketing its Softcup as an over-the-counter disposable contraceptive diaphragm in the Russian Federation. The Instead Softcup is currently sold throughout Canada, the US and Europe as a feminine hygiene product that collects, rather than absorbs, menstrual flow.

The Russian Academy has approved use of the Softcup as a contraceptive when used with a spermicide. Based on the available data regarding Amphora, the Academy also authorized additional clinical trials on the effectiveness of the Softcup in combination with Amphora as a contraceptive microbicide – looking at both contraceptive and microbicidal endpoints. Those trials are beginning this fall and data regarding the contraceptive efficacy of the product are expected within six months.

Amphora lubricant, clinically known as Acidform, is a bio-adhesive and acid-buffering product that keeps the vagina’s natural pH low, even in the presence of semen. As a potential microbicide, it has successfully completed Phase I safety trials with and without a diaphragm. With this FDA approval, Amphora has become the first sexual lubricant also undergoing clinical trials as a candidate microbicide.

We welcome your input and contributions for future issues!

Correspondence can be addressed to info@global-campaign.org.

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