



Global Campaign News – Issue #67 12 June 2006

Welcome to the *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 STIs. This and previous issues of *GC News* are available online at <http://www.global-campaign.org/gcnews.htm>

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New website: HIV vaccines and microbicides resource tracking Global

On the eve of the UNGASS review, the HIV Vaccines and Microbicides Resource Tracking Working Group generated new estimates of public sector investment in HIV vaccine and microbicide research, development, and advocacy in 2005. These estimates are available on their new website: <http://hivresourcetracking.org/>. According to their preliminary report, the public sector invested an estimated US\$654 million in preventive HIV vaccines and about US\$139 million in microbicides in 2005. A full report on global investment in these technologies – including funding from philanthropic institutions and private industry – will be available this summer.

The HIV Vaccines and Microbicides Resource Tracking Working Group was established in 2004 to generate and disseminate high-quality, detailed and comparable data on annual investments in preventive HIV vaccine and microbicide research and development (R&D), and policy and advocacy activities. These data can be used to monitor current levels of effort; identify trends in investment, spending, and research focus; identify areas needing more resources and effort; assess the impact of public policies aimed at increasing investment in new prevention technologies (NPTs); and provide a fact base for policy advocacy on R&D investments and allocations. The *Working Group* is comprised of the AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition ([AVAC](#)), the Alliance for Microbicide Development ([AMD](#)), the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative ([IAVI](#)) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS ([UNAIDS](#)).

Launch of the Prevention Now! Campaign Global

The spread of HIV infections among women worldwide is accelerating, and both women and men in vulnerable and marginalized populations have limited access to existing prevention technologies. Since the female condom was first introduced, access has been limited in part due to myths and misconceptions which have limited investment by governments and international donors. This lack of investment has, in turn, kept the per-unit cost of female condoms unnecessarily high.

The Center for Health and Gender Equity, the International Women's Health Coalition, the World YWCA and Action Aid Uganda are working together to launch the Prevention Now! Campaign--an international grassroots advocacy effort with the goal of dramatically increasing access to female condoms and other existing prevention methods by demanding increased investment by governments and international donor agencies NOW! A panel discussion took place in New York on 2 June, and a website will be launched in the coming weeks.

Belgian Parliamentarians Show Support for Microbicides and Vaccines

Europe

A special hearing on microbicides and vaccines took place at the Belgian Chamber of Representatives on 16 May to generate greater Belgian support for new prevention technologies. The meeting was hosted by the Parliamentary Group for Population and Development, a cross-party group of Members of Parliament (MPs) dedicated to advancing the Cairo agenda. Co-Chair Magda De Meyer was seen wearing a Global Campaign button as she introduced the session.

In their presentations, the Belgian AIDS Ambassador, Michel Laatschenko, Enrico Mollica from the European Commission, Frans van den Boom of IAVI, and Rebekah Webb, European Coordinator of the Global Campaign all voiced support for increased attention to new prevention technologies. Discussion highlighted the need for global research and development mechanisms, the upcoming discussion at the World Health Assembly, and the role of public private partnerships to advance new options. After the meeting, many MPs tabled parliamentary questions to Ministers and are now planning to introduce a resolution on the issue later in the year.

The event was the initiative of one of GC Europe's newest NGO partners, Sensoa, which acts as secretariat to the Parliamentary Group. It is hoped that Belgium will shortly become the latest European nation to contribute to microbicide research, having recently financed the Microbicides 2006 conference in Cape Town, South Africa.

Johannesburg Position on HIV/AIDS and Women's and Girls' Rights in Africa

Africa

In April 2006, women from across the African continent participated in the African Women's Regional Consultation on Women's and Rights and HIV/AIDS in Africa, in Johannesburg, South Africa. HIV positive women, women's rights activists, feminists, scholars, professionals, community workers and policy makers drafted the Johannesburg Position on HIV/AIDS and Women's and Girl's Rights in Africa.

The position begins with the following powerful statements: "*Deeply concerned* that despite various interventions aimed at prevention, care, support and treatment of HIV and AIDS, the global pandemic has had and continues to have a devastating impact on the lives of African women and girls; *Further concerned* that in spite of the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women and girls, governments are yet to recognise the centrality of promoting and protecting women's and girls' human rights in all HIV and AIDS interventions..."

The position urges all African heads of state and government and other relevant stakeholders to ensure women's and girl's human rights, leadership and accountability, HIV and AIDS programme interventions (in the areas of prevention, treatment, and care), sufficient resources, and international institutions of development.

The full statement is available at: <http://www.sarpn.org.za/documents/d0002000/index.php>

UNGASS review met by criticism from civil society

Global

From May 31 to June 2, the United Nations General Assembly High-Level Meeting on AIDS took place in New York. The meeting was marked by an unprecedented participation of civil society in the process, significant recognition of the feminization of the pandemic, but disagreement on several points. The resulting UN Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS twice mentions commitment to developing new prevention technologies, including microbicides, but remains weak in many places. The final declaration is available at www.ungasshiv.org. A joint press statement released by more than 60 civil society groups on the last day of the meeting details some of the frustrations with the process and final outcome. Excerpts from this press release are included below:

Excerpt: International civil society denounce UN meeting on AIDS as a failure – Released 2 June 2006

Civil society groups from around the world denounced the final UN Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, released after marathon negotiations during the UN High Level meeting on AIDS this week.

“Once more we are disappointed at the failure to demonstrate real political leadership in the fight against the pandemic” said The Most Revd Njongonkulu Ndungane, the Anglican Archbishop of Capetown. “Even at this late stage, we call on the world’s political leaders to rise up and meet the challenges that the pandemic presents and to set ambitious targets at a national level to guarantee universal access to treatment, care, support and prevention.”

UN Member States refused to commit to hard targets on funding, prevention, care and treatment. They rejected frank acknowledgement that some of the today’s fastest growing HIV epidemics are happening among injecting and other drug users, sex workers and men who have sex with men. “The final outcome document is pathetically weak. It is remarkable at this stage in the global epidemic that governments can not set the much needed targets nor can they can name in the document the very people that are most vulnerable” said Sisonke Msimang of the African Civil Society Coalition.

African government delegations reneged on their promises in the 2006 Abuja Common position agreed to by African Heads of State. South Africa and Egypt, in particular, took a deliberate decision to oppose the setting of targets on prevention and treatment, despite the fact that both participated in the Abuja Summit that endorsed ambitious targets to be reached by 2010. “The continent that is most ravaged by AIDS has demonstrated a complete lack of leadership. It is a sad, sad day as an African to be represented by such poor leadership” said Omololu Faloubi of the African Civil Society Coalition.

There has however been a strong recognition in the declaration of the alarming feminization of the pandemic. Commitments were made to ensure that women can exercise their right to have control over their sexuality and to the goal of achieving universal access to reproductive health by 2015.

This was compounded by the declaration failing to acknowledge that some of the today’s fastest growing HIV epidemics are happening among injecting and other drug users, sex workers and men who have sex with men, despite strong support from the Rio Group of countries. For example, governments have ignored the needs of injecting drug users by not stating the need for substitution drug treatment, putting them at further risk. “Failing to fully address the needs of these groups, and particularly to counter stigma and discrimination by decriminalizing drug use and sexual behaviors, will render them more invisible and ultimately lead to even higher rates of HIV/AIDS” said Raminta Stuikyte of the Central and Eastern European Harm Reduction Network.

While there has been a failure of governments to face the realities of HIV/AIDS, civil society will be holding them to account. Civil society will hold governments to account to deliver on universal access. Civil society will make sure governments recognize and support vulnerable populations. The failure of governments to commit will not be accepted.

Critical challenges to clinical trials discussed at Microbicides 2006

Global

As a continuation of our coverage of the Microbicides 2006 conference that appeared in the last issue of GC News, we would like to draw your attention to an excellent series of articles written by Theo Smart for NAM and the aidsmap website. Five articles, in particular, explore the challenges facing our field in implementing clinical trials that will answer the critical question of whether or not microbicide candidates work:

- *Who will control microbicides?* Although microbicides have been considered a female-controlled HIV prevention method, studies at the conference reveal that most women would prefer to tell their regular partners if they are using a microbicide.
- *Poor adherence reported in some of the microbicide studies.* Self-reports from women in trials tell a complicated story about the use of condoms and gel.

- *Microbicide efficacy studies target high risk women for enrolment.* In an effort to keep the trial size manageable, studies are enrolling women who they believe are most at risk of contracting HIV. But this strategy presents its own challenges.
- *Are the microbicide clinical efficacy studies big enough?* Although the large-scale microbicides trials are some of the largest HIV-related clinical studies ever performed, low incidence rates, poor adherence, and loss to follow-up may mean that these studies need to be even larger.
- *High rates of pregnancy pose challenges for microbicide trials.* High pregnancy rates may result in studies being underpowered.

In addition, several other articles provide concise reports back from the conference.

- Microbicides 2006 meeting opens with a focus on the women of Africa and the failure of existing HIV prevention methods
- Treatment Action campaign marches for HIV prevention
- High concentrations of lime juice kill HIV but too caustic to use as a microbicide
- How will microbicides be delivered?
- What products are in the pipeline?
- Microbicide activity against sexually transmitted infections could affect how good products look against HIV
- Challenges for the clinical development of microbicides — overview

All of these articles are available from the aidsmap home page, <http://www.aidsmap.com/>, and then by clicking on *Conference news* on the right hand side.

New presentations on vaginal and rectal microbicides

Global

The Global Campaign is pleased to share two updated presentations on our download centre – www.global-campaign.org/download.htm. Both presentations are available for download in powerpoint or PDF format. The powerpoint format allows users to not only adapt the presentation as they like, but people can also view a “script” in the notes pages that make it easy for advocates to present with maximum confidence.

Our 18 slide introduction microbicides presentation provides an overview for new advocates to what microbicides are, where they are in development, and why advocacy is needed around the world. Add-on modules for this basic presentation are planned in the next year. The 28 slide more detailed presentation on rectal microbicides discusses rates of anal intercourse, the development of rectal microbicides, and advocacy messages.

New book: HIV/AIDS In Europe

Europe

The World Health Organisation has published a new volume entitled “HIV/AIDS in Europe: Moving from death sentence to chronic disease management” to tell the story of HIV/AIDS in Europe from a diverse perspectives. As the book explains, more than two million people are now living with HIV in the European region, and prevention, treatment and care are needed more than ever.

Several of the contributors, many of them well-known figures in the field, point to the potential of microbicides in the fight against HIV. “Any further progress in HIV prevention depends on not only reinforcing existing programmes, but also investing significantly more in the development of new technologies like vaccines and microbicides”. Edited by Srdan Matic, Jeffrey Lazarus and Martin Donoghoe, this volume makes essential reading to better understand both the history and current picture of HIV and its impact in Europe.

To read online or order a copy, visit:

http://www.euro.who.int/InformationSources/Publications/Catalogue/20051123_2

Now available on-line: Global Campaign Update Report

Global

The Global Campaign is pleased to announce the online publication of our Update Report, covering the period from September 2004 to February 2006. The report can be downloaded from our website's download center at <http://www.global-campaign.org/pubs.htm>.

In each section, the report provides a snapshot of the microbicides field, and then describes how the Global Campaign is responding to the needs of communities and advocates. In the Global South, we continue to collaborate with partners to work towards a balance between the rights of trial participants and host communities and the urgency of developing a safe and effective microbicide. In the Global North, we are building public and political support for investment into research, while ensuring that the field is considering the regulatory and access issues that we will face in the coming years.

As you will see, we have made strides in numerous areas, but could not have accomplished so much without the efforts of advocates around the world. We hope you will find the report useful in reflecting on our progress, better understanding how your work fits in with the efforts around the world, and describing the Global Campaign to others.

We welcome your input and contributions for future issues! Please send emails to: info@global-campaign.org. If you would like to unsubscribe to the *Global Campaign News*, please reply to this e-mail with the subject line: UNSUBSCRIBE.