

## Press release

### **FLEMISH GOVERNMENT AND UNAIDS LAUNCH WOMEN AND AIDS PROJECT IN MALAWI**

**Brussels, 22 November 2006** - The Flemish Government and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) today announced the launch of a four-year programme focussing on prevention, women and adolescent girls and children in Southern Africa.

This programme includes a specific project in Malawi that will contribute towards the realization of Malawi's *National Plan of Action on Women, Girls and AIDS* to reduce the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV infection, and facilitate their access to health and socio-economic services. According to the UNAIDS Global Report, in 2005 an estimated 59% of adults living with HIV over the age of 15 were women. Gender inequalities, cultural practices and social stigma all contribute to the high levels of HIV among women and girls.

"Increasingly AIDS in Malawi has a woman's face. Deeply rooted gender inequalities, women's limited economic opportunities and power as well as social norms place women at an increased risk of HIV infection," said UNAIDS Executive Director Peter Piot in Brussels. "This project will help strengthen efforts Malawi is making to address the growing burden of AIDS on women and girls." The initiative promotes existing programmes, including support services for survivors of gender-based violence, and helps strengthen the capacity of local non-governmental organizations to address gender and AIDS within their activities. It will support the implementation of the national strategy with a sustained advocacy campaign to highlight the situation of women and adolescent girls.

The larger four-year programme for Southern Africa will be coordinated by UNAIDS, drawing on the strengths of the entire UN System, the governments of the Southern African sub-region as well as international and local non-governmental organizations. Through the programme UNAIDS will help identify gaps in HIV prevention policy and in countries' responses to the needs of women, adolescent girls and children.

"Flanders is focussing its cooperation on a limited number of priorities. Since 2000 we have been supporting the fight against AIDS in South Africa and since 2003 in Mozambique. Malawi is now becoming our third partner country in Southern Africa," said Geert Bourgeois, Minister in charge of Development Cooperation of the Flemish Government. "UNAIDS is our privileged partner for such an undertaking, allowing us to focus on prevention, the protection of women and adolescent girls as well as children at local, national and sub-regional level. In 2006-2009, I am reserving 12 million euros for the fight against AIDS in Southern Africa. One quarter of this amount will be entrusted to UNAIDS," he said.

#### **Contact**

Beth Magne-Watts | UNAIDS Geneva | +41 22 791 5074 | [magnewatts@unaids.org](mailto:magnewatts@unaids.org)

Ben Weyts | Flemish Government, Brussels | +32 496 275 781 | [ben.weyts@vlaanderen.be](mailto:ben.weyts@vlaanderen.be)