



Press release

FLEMISH GOVERNMENT AND UN LAUNCH WOMEN AND AIDS PROGRAMME IN MOZAMBIQUE

Maputo, 6 May - The Flemish Government and the United Nations in Mozambique today announced the launch of a four year programme to combat the growing feminisation of the HIV and AIDS epidemic in Mozambique.

According to figures from the Mozambique Government, an estimated 58% of people living with HIV and AIDS in the country are women and girls and 75% of those living with HIV in the age group 15 – 24 are female (Impacto Demográfico do HIV/SIDA em Moçambique, MISAU/INE 2002).

While 44% of women and 60% of men in Mozambique know at least two ways to avoid HIV and AIDS, only 6% of women and 12% of men report having used a condom during their last sexual encounter (DHS, MISAU/INE 2003).

"Increasingly HIV and AIDS in Mozambique 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," says Petra Lantz, UNFPA Representative in Mozambique, whose agency will execute the programme.

The programme, which will be coordinated by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), tapping on the strengths of the entire UN System, the Government of Mozambique, international and local NGOs, will identify gaps in the response to women and girls in Mozambique and will support the development of an integrated national strategy with a sustained advocacy campaign to highlight the situation of women, girls and AIDS.

"The programme is one answer to the growing feminisation of the HIV and AIDS epidemic. It will help to strengthen integration of gender within Mozambique's national response," said Geert Bourgeois, Minister for Administrative Affairs, Foreign Policy, Media and Tourism of the Flemish Government, currently on a five-day mission to Mozambique.

"Focusing on women and girls is essential. Women are not often in a position to negotiate safer sex in Mozambique, and when women lose their husbands or partners to AIDS, they are often denied their inheritance rights, leaving them destitute and even more vulnerable," said Telva Barros, UNAIDS Country Coordinator in Mozambique.

The initiative promotes existing programmes including support services for survivors of gender-based violence and helps strengthen the capacity of local NGOs to address Gender and HIV and AIDS within their activities. The programme is being undertaken in response to the Report of the United Nations Secretary General's Task Force on Women, Girls and HIV and AIDS, the UNAIDS led Global Coalition on Women and AIDS and the newly released National Strategic Plan on HIV and AIDS in Mozambique, 2005 - 2009.

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