

WORLD AIDS DAY 2011: CEGAA urges for an uprising in AIDS budgeting

As World AIDS Day dawns in 2011, the horizon of HIV knowledge and action has expanded beyond health science – and our progress gives us good reason to celebrate. Vigorous activism, research excellence, stronger political will and more cohesive social leadership have resulted in access to viable treatment, a range of proven biomedical prevention mechanisms, clearer epidemiological profiles, and broad-based HIV counselling and testing.

Yet, in this moment of significant gains, commonality of purpose and commitment to accelerating our efforts, we in Africa find ourselves on the edge of a sheer drop in our HIV/AIDS response. The global economic crisis is fracturing foreign donor pledges and deepening socio-economic inequality in middle- and lower-income countries with a high burden of HIV/AIDS.

Weak results in behavioural change to prevent HIV incidence and ever-decreasing funds for managing the epidemic through treatment mean that our national budgets will be drained by the flourishing of HIV. The pandemic is eroding labour vitality across regions: in South Africa, productivity is recorded as being at a 40-year low, with much of this drag attributed to illness and death caused by HIV and AIDS. In terms of economic growth and social development, unmet treatment needs and persistent HIV infection will foster regression rather than redress.

The terrain for research and advocacy must now ground the economics of AIDS – tied into health systems and public policy – as a developmental priority. If we increase and optimally implement our spending on HIV, we could realistically see AIDS being overcome by 2030. Access to funding, along with efficient and accountable AIDS budgeting is critical for preserving and augmenting our response gains.

Since 2006, the Centre for Economic Governance and AIDS in Africa (CEGAA) has joined forces with civil society, governments and communities to move the African HIV/AIDS response assertively into an era of monitoring, understanding and improving the quality of public spending and service delivery for health and HIV/AIDS. The results of our work [\(link\)](#) yield key recommendations for this movement:

- ▶ Long-term external funding commitments from sources such as the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria should be secured within the framework of “smarter investment”, as envisaged by UNAIDS: maximising the benefits of the HIV response; using country-specific epidemiology to ensure rational resource allocation; encouraging countries to implement the most effective programmes based on local

context, and increasing efficiency in HIV prevention, treatment, care and support¹;

- ▶ Sustainable domestic financing must be captured through alternative sources such as the Financial Transaction Tax (FTT), National Health Insurance scheme and HIV/AIDS levy, with African governments taking proactive ownership of the donor transition process;
- ▶ Comprehensive and effective social mobilisation for behavioural prevention of HIV transmission – “turning off the tap” while we deal with the flood – is essential;
- ▶ We need a new paradigm of public and private donor alignment with results-based national efforts to deploy existing funds through improved efficiencies, accountability and measurable impact.

Echoing the voices of many global champions in the HIV/AIDS arena, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has said: "Heading into the fourth decade of AIDS, we are finally in a position to end the epidemic. Financing will be critical to success. We must build on the political commitments, investments, energy, activism and determination that have brought us to this turning point."²

CEGAA's drive for cost-effective policies and transparent, inclusive use of financial resources for wellbeing answers this call.

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¹ HIV/AIDS: "Unprecedented progress", despite poor funding. IRINPlus News, 21 November 2011.
<http://www.plusnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=94271>

² UN Secretary-General Message on World AIDS Day 2011, Af-AIDS, 29 November 2011.
<http://www.safaids.net/content/united-nations-secretary-general-message-world-aids-day>