

## COMMUNIQUE

### **INAUGURAL INSTITUTE ON GENDER AND HIV/AIDS SOUTHERN AFRICA, 7-11 JUNE 2004**

Kopanong Conference Centre, Johannesburg, South Africa

#### ***Preamble***

The Inaugural International Institute on Gender and HIV/AIDS (IIGH/A) brought together policy makers, programme managers, civil society organizations, youth, academics and researchers from Botswana, Lesotho, South Africa, Swaziland and Canada, as well as regional and international partners<sup>1</sup> to deliberate on the successes and the challenges – the benefits and the obstacles – of integrating a gender perspective into work addressing the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

The IIGH/A is an initiative of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, Dalhousie University, Canada, who developed a close partnership with the Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS Research Alliance (SAHARA), the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and the AIDS and Rights Alliance for Southern Africa (ARASA), along with a number of other critical stakeholders for its launch in Southern Africa.

This is an Institute without walls, without borders – catalysing an opportunity for partners and stakeholders to network, share expertise and experience, and enable mutual learning based on good practices and lessons learned. The goal of the Institute is to strengthen the connections between practice, policy and research in order to enhance or extend existing efforts that are being made to tackle issues of gender and HIV and AIDS in Southern Africa and beyond.

#### ***We, the delegates of the IIGH/A in Southern Africa***

#### ***Noting that:***

- the term 'gender' describes socially given attributes, roles, activities and responsibilities connected to being male or female in society. It addresses the power relationships between men and women of all ages, as well as boys and girls. Tackling gender inequality must include analysis and the development of appropriate responses to ensure that women and men have equal rights, decision-making capacity, choice, control over and access to opportunities and resources;
- all programmes, policies and strategies to address HIV and AIDS must address gender inequality as both a cause and consequence of this pandemic. HIV and AIDS must also be seen as a development issue requiring a multi-sectoral and multi-level response;
- strong and effective partnerships between governments, civil society and the research community are critical to ensure that the development and implementation of policies and programmes are based on relevant research and analysis, and to ensure that the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of gender-sensitive HIV and AIDS responses are appropriately supported, monitored and evaluated;

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<sup>1</sup> Including (in alphabetical order): Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA); Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA); Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR); Coady International Institute; Commonwealth Regional Health Community Secretariat (CRHCS); EngenderHealth and the Men as Partners (MAP) Network; International Council of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW); Southern African AIDS Information Distribution Services (SafAIDS); UNAIDS; Women's Health Bureau, Health Canada.

***Recognising that:***

- Southern African countries have intensified their prevention efforts to reduce new infections, to provide care and treatment for people living with HIV and/or AIDS, and to mitigate the impact;
- efforts in the Southern African region to create awareness, provide information, and to promote prevention of HIV/AIDS are beginning – in some countries – to have an impact on behaviour change and reduction of new infections, particularly those resulting from parent-to-child transmission and also among young people;
- more needs to be done to address the fact that many people across the region are still being infected, particularly women and girls, and that the social and economic impacts of HIV/AIDS threaten to erode development, growth and opportunity in this region;
- a human rights approach is critical to address HIV, AIDS and gender inequality and stronger emphasis should be placed on protection and promotion of rights in laws, constitutions, all areas of the justice system as well as other societal institutions;
- stronger partnerships should be developed between women and men of all ages at household, community, national and regional levels to tackle HIV, AIDS and gender inequality. All organisations working in the area of gender and HIV and AIDS should build stronger linkages and collaborate in their work.

***Therefore, Agree to:***

- strengthen the synergy between policy, research and action, and to ensure that all efforts to address gender as well as HIV and AIDS are multi-sectoral and multi-level, and integrate the three stakeholders groups;
- mainstream gender analysis and develop strategies to address gender inequalities in all policies, programmes and research that relate to HIV and AIDS, with adequate resources allocated to enable this to be effective and sustainable;
- build upon and strengthen the network of government, civil society and research partners present at this Institute – and other existing or potential partners – at national, regional and international levels and undertake joint or collaborative initiatives, as appropriate;
- increase efforts to mobilise males of all ages as partners in the fight against HIV and AIDS, to ensure that its gender dimensions are addressed;
- support initiatives that focus on young people, and the integration of gender as well as HIV and AIDS into educational programmes and curricula;
- build capacity, increase opportunities for dialogue and action, and strengthen partnerships with traditional leaders, healers, youth, faith-based organisations and other key stakeholders to urgently integrate gender approaches into the response to HIV and AIDS;
- consult with our national partners and stakeholders on the country and regional Action Plans developed in the course of this Institute, implementing recommendations and actions as appropriate;
- develop mechanisms to support ongoing consultation and collaboration at country, regional, and international levels, and review progress on the outcomes of the Institute at regular intervals.