



Children's Rights Centre

Nov/Dec 2009

CONTENTS:

- 1. November 25- Dec 10: 16 days of activism against violence**
 - (a) SA campaigns
 - (b) Events & dates
 - (c) Not just talk – good practice
- 2. December 1st - World AIDS Day – HIV & children**
 - (a) SAHARA Conference
 - (b) Positive teens overlooked
 - (c) Routine testing for babies
- 3. December 10th - Human Rights Day**
 - (a) Right to identity & equality – culture and language rights
 - (b) Right to PEACE - Nobel Peace Prize Women
 - (c) Petition to free the hikers detained in Iran

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UNCRC @ 20— HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

NewsBytes on Children's Rights

1. 16 DAYS of ACTIVISM AGAINST VIOLENCE **(a) WHAT IS THE 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM ABOUT?**

We CAN end violence against women & children!
Commit! Act! Demand!

The *16 days* global campaign on ending gender violence has been running in South Africa since 1998. It also includes a focus on ending violence against children. It starts each year on 25 November, International Day Against Violence Against Women and ends on 10 December, International Human Rights Day.

The campaign's central messages: women's rights and children's rights are human rights and violence against them constitutes a violation of human rights!

LISTEN TO DR EVE, SEXOLOGIST, ON THE 16 DAYS CAMPAIGN!

DR. EVE, the well-known clinical sexologist, is at present visiting South Africa, and will host 2 radio shows per week with a *16 Days of Activism* Theme running throughout each show. Tune into www.heart1049.fm or www.capetalk.co.za to hear live streaming audio of the Dr. Eve show.

Contact: dreve@dreve.co.za

Website: <http://www.dreve.co.za>

365 DAY NATIONAL ACTION PLAN AGAINST GENDER VIOLENCE

The South African *365 Day National Action Plan* was launched on the 8th March 2009 - International Women's Day - and places violence against women firmly on the national agenda. South Africa becomes the first country in the world to launch such a comprehensive plan to fight gender violence

The final action plan is not just full of lofty aims and objectives. Rather it has detailed actions, clear targets, indicators, timeframes and a budget. It is a living document that is set to respond to the prevailing realities.

What remains a challenge is the implementation of this plan where every stakeholder - government, business, civil society, media and individuals - will have to play their role. Activists hold that the ordinary women and girls who have suffered abuse will "need to feel the real difference" that this plan will bring to her life. "We hear many promises, some fulfilled, but most remain that, promises," activists caution.
(See website: <http://www.womensnet.org.za/>)

Nov/Dec 2009 – NewsBytes on Children's Rights

(b) JOIN IN WITH INTERNATIONAL EVENTS!

CELEBRATION FOR THE 30th ANNIVERSARY OF CEDAW

On 3rd December 2009, the United Nations will hold a global celebration for the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The event will bring together speakers from around the world who will share examples of how the Convention has been used to implement women's human rights and achieve gender equality in their country. Participants will hear how CEDAW has been applied to law, policy and judicial decisions, heralding and securing greater human rights for women and girls. Attendees will also learn how the Optional Protocol to the Convention—which celebrates its 10th year in 2009—has succeeded to raise awareness about the Convention and bring justice to individual women. Opening remarks by Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and a live performance by Sarah Jones. Due to space restrictions, the event is by invitation only, but WATCH the celebration live on UN webcast: <http://www.un.org/webcast/>.

Say NO – UniTE!

This November the United Nations Development Fund for Women – UNIFEM - will launch a new platform for action, *Say NO-UNITE* to End Violence against Women. Whether you volunteer at a shelter, reach out to students, advocate for better laws and policies — every action counts. For more information, see attached [platform for action](#) or go to the website <http://www.saynotoviolence.org>

Listen to audio-files on the efforts of men & women to end gender violence

World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC-WIN) have organised community radio producers from Asia-Pacific, Middle East, Africa, Europe, North America and Latin America and the Caribbean to dedicate this year's 16 Days Campaign to highlighting the efforts of women and men working to bring an end to gender violence. The audio files of some of the participating community radios and production groups in the 16 Days AMARC-WIN will be available at www.amarc.org/16journs.

(c) NOT JUST TALK: MEN'S TRAVELLING CONFERENCE IN KENYA:

An example of good practice in advocacy: entertainment, involvement, counselling, help!

Every year, during the 16 Days of Activism, Men for Gender Equality Now – MEGEN - holds a Men's Travelling Conference in Kenya, during which the team at MEGEN travels around the country sensitizing communities on gender-based violence (GBV) and rights in relation to HIV/AIDS. These Travelling Conferences are successful because most community members would not otherwise be able to attend formal seminars. [The team brings artists to educate and entertain the public regarding various issues of GBV, and involves the public in the performance. A survivor support team \(Rapid Response\) also engages with communities, doing one-on-one counselling and taking up cases of violations. They follow up to ensure that victims/survivors receive justice for the crimes committed against them.](#)

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WORLD AIDS DAY – DECEMBER 1st

(a) SAHARA Conference - social aspects of HIV

SAHARA will be holding a 4-day conference on **30 November - 3 December 2009** at [Gallagher Estate](#) in Midrand, Gauteng province, South Africa.

The SAHARA conference has a very specific focus, the social aspects of HIV – that is the social and cultural aspects of the epidemic (as opposed to the bio-medical ones).

An important feature of the conference is its strong Africa focus. So often, Africa is analysed and spoken about by people outside the continent. A real effort is made to provide a forum for African voices, and for local responses to be highlighted.

The networking opportunities at this conference are thus unique in that it provides a platform for African scholars to interact.

The 2007 SAHARA conference held in Kisumu, Kenya highlighted the fact that there are vastly different opinions on issues such as male circumcision and homosexuality. The 2009 conference will thus have the theme "socio-cultural responses to HIV" in order to explore these controversies.

The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) is the administrative host organisation for SAHARA. The conference will be held in collaboration with major partners including the HSRC, UNAIDS, the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), SADC, UNESCO, and AU institutions (including NEPAD).

"Today, I call upon all of you - every global citizen - not to forget. ... We must never reduce the issue (HIV/AIDS) to statistics."

Nelson Mandela, Bangkok, July 2004

(b) South Africa: Positive teens overlooked

In South Africa a generation of children who were born HIV-positive is reaching young adulthood, but they are not getting the type of message or psychosocial support they need from the public sector.

"These kids are getting older on treatment and surviving on treatment; they're becoming sexually active, they want to get married," HIV paediatrician Dr Harry Moultrie told the annual University of the Witwatersrand AIDS Research Symposium in Johannesburg recently. Moultrie also works at the Harriet Shezi paediatric clinic, in one of South Africa's largest hospitals, Chris Hani Baragwanath. The clinic is one of just 12 in the country offering specialized services to HIV-positive youth, and has only recently been able to offer psychosocial support services.

[The clinic has been running regular group sessions since it received funding from UNICEF in December 2008, allowing HIV-positive teens to discuss issues that affect their lives with a trained moderator.](#)

"You have to realize that a lot of these children have gone through multiple childhood traumas, including multiple changes in caregivers," he said. "They need to be able to say, 'I'm okay with who I am, and I accept my HIV status'."

"We are beginning to see data that they are not achieving the outcomes they should – we're seeing a lot of teen pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and poor developmental outcomes."

"For a long time we took the approach in trying to promote adherence that it was about providing knowledge to adolescents," he told IRIN/PlusNews.

"If you are going to get the message to adolescents in that way, it's wrong, because the inherent developmental state of an adolescent is adversarial – what teenager ever did what they were told to do? It's not about the HIV side of things, it's about the children."

This article is adapted from PlusNews: 8 September 2009

'A TEENAGER'S OWN STORY

GABORONE, 4 November 2009 (PlusNews)

Katlego Lally*, 17, belongs to a club for HIV-positive teenagers run by the Baylor Children's Clinic Centre of Excellence in Gaborone, Botswana's capital. She talked to IRIN/PlusNews about how the club has helped her overcome feelings of isolation and depression.

"I was born in 1992. Back then, there was no PMTCT [prevention of mother-to-child transmission] so I got the [HI-]virus from my mother, but I wasn't diagnosed then. I just grew up falling sick every time, and we didn't know why.

"In 2003 we did some tests and then they found out that I had the virus, and my mother also. I don't think I understood at that time ... But as time went by I came to understand the disease, and that's when I told my brain: 'Okay, this is a death sentence', and that's when I became depressed.

"I remember in 2007, I was falling sick often and my exams were about to come, so I was a bit down, always just kicking myself – 'Why? Why me? What have I done?' - I was just living in a dark tunnel, waiting for the day I would die.

"Then last year I was referred to Baylor [Children's Clinic] and that's when I think my life changed. The doctor told me about Teen Club; then I came and I saw a whole new world that I never knew.

"This year I was elected to be a [Teen Club] leader. I have to be a role model to the younger teen members, I help with serving lunch, lead ice-breakers and train other teen leaders from satellite clubs. I've made a lot of friends - they're like my family. Everyone is open with each other, because when you're in the same situation you understand each other. Being a teenager is very hard - you have to keep up with the changing life, do what the others do. My school friends don't know [about being HIV-positive], but just like most people here generally in Botswana, especially teachers when they talk about HIV, they bring it up in a wholly negative way.

"I have friends who drink, who have sex, and sometimes you try to tell them: 'this is not good'. But how are you going to make them understand? You'd maybe have to start by saying, 'I'm HIV positive and you don't want to be HIV-positive', and that would be like, ugh, so I just leave it.

"I want to be a lawyer, but if not law, then radio journalism, and if not, then accounting ... or I want to be a movie star. I go on dates, but sometimes I can just be out of the dating mode. I want a person I can spend the rest of my life with, but when the time comes for us to maybe have sex, how am I going to disclose my status? You never know what they'll think. What if that person is not that trustworthy? Once you tell him he'll get really angry and start to spread rumours about you, so I just have to leave it."

*Not her real name

(PLUSNEWS) [Children](#), (PLUSNEWS) [HIV/AIDS \(PlusNews\)](#), (PLUSNEWS) [PWAs/ASOs - PlusNews](#)

In the UN Convention, States recognise not only that every child has the inherent right to life, but that governments should ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child (Art 6)

(c) Routine infant HIV testing acceptable & feasible at SA immunisation clinics

By Michael Carter (HATiP | Issue 144 | 10 September 2009 [page 3](#))

Routine HIV testing at infant immunisation clinics is feasible and acceptable, investigators from South Africa report in the online edition of *AIDS*. They found that most mothers agreed to HIV testing.

"If implemented as the standard of care at primary health care clinics, more than half of infants and mothers would know their HIV status at about 6-10 weeks of age after which they could gain access to a continuum of care."

Testing at the immunisation clinics allows both the mothers and infants to be linked into antiretroviral treatment programmes. Although early initiation of HIV treatment, like this, in HIV-infected babies significantly reduces risk of early death, many infants in South Africa are not put on treatment because their infection remains undiagnosed.

In the survey, a total of 646 mothers of infants attending the immunisation clinics were offered opt-out HIV tests by the counsellors, and 90% of the mothers consented to their baby being tested for HIV. The main reasons for accepting a test were to confirm the HIV status of the infant (77%) and to access to antiretroviral therapy (55%). Over a quarter of women also said that the test result would help inform their infant feeding practices.

Reference. (From Rollins N et al. *Universal HIV testing of infants at immunization clinics: an acceptable and feasible approach for early infant's diagnosis in HIV prevalence settings*. *AIDS* 23 (online edition), 2009.

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY - DECEMBER 10th

Right to identity & equality – culture and language rights
Right to PEACE - Nobel Peace Prize Women
Free the hikers - petition

(a) Right to identity & equality – culture and language rights

The right to identity and equality is central to the rights set out in our Constitution and in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Children who are unsure of their identity and feel discriminated against lack the foundation on which to build and grow their lives.

When asked by his father whether he was Zulu, a child of four said 'No – I speak English!' His Zulu father recounted this incident in a newspaper recently and explains how distressed he felt – and how he would now take steps to teach his son Zulu!

Are our national languages endangered?

According to world experts, indigenous languages are in danger of ultimately disappearing when children are assimilated into a dominant culture through the school system! English – the language of the *cultural imperialists* – is taking over as the only language of teaching in most of our schools. Many schools do not even offer the home language as a 'Second Language' and our children learn Afrikaans or French instead of isiZulu, seSotho or other official African languages!

We are under a terrible misconception in believing that children will do better at school if they start English in the preschool – and ONLY speak English at school from then on.

The mistake is in the word ONLY! Children benefit from learning other languages IF their education is mother-tongue-based and their education is bilingual or even multi-lingual.

The benefits of mother-tongue-based bi-lingual or multilingual education include

- **More self-confidence as children have a better personal identity and self-image**
- **Conceptual foundations are established for learning that includes understanding and critical thought (if indigenous languages are learnt well and not suppressed)**
- **Access to more information and opportunities (knowing other languages and other cultures)**
- **More flexible thinking processes, thanks to the ability to process information in two languages**

... once a child learns his or her indigenous language well, learning other languages will be easier. It is imperative that a policy to promote all cultures and languages be followed. Sufficient funding is also needed to support the development of teaching methods for the pupil’s own language and literacy materials and scripts.

Right to PEACE – Nobel Peace Prize Women

This year, 2009, as we all know, the Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded to President Barak Obama. And we all hope he will live up to this prestigious award!

The Nobel Women’s Initiative, established in 2006 by Nobel Peace Laureates: Jody Williams, Shirin Ebadi, Wangari Maathai, Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan Maguire has this to say:

*“We **believe** peace is much more than the absence of armed conflict. Peace is the commitment to equality and justice; a democratic world free of physical, economic, cultural, political, religious, sexual and environmental violence and the constant threat of these forms of violence against women - indeed against all of humanity. We six women - representing North and South America, Europe, the Middle East and Africa - decided to bring together our extraordinary experiences in a united effort for peace with justice and equality.”*

“What I treasure most in life is being able to dream,” says Guatemalan Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Rigoberta Menchú Tum. Holding dreams is an important part of life, especially in Mayan culture; but dreaming for Rigoberta took on mammoth proportions in 1979 when years of civil war and state violence against the indigenous Maya took the lives of her father, her mother, her brother, nephew and nieces. Rigoberta is the first indigenous Indian – and one of the very few women of any nation - to receive a Nobel Prize.

She has responded to a call to work with children who are initiating peace projects through an NGO called PEACEJAM, an international education program based in Arvada that brings young people into contact with Nobel Peace Prize winners to work for change. Archbishop Tutu and former President Nelson Mandela are among them. (www.guateconnect.com/odhagua & www.peacejam.org/laureates.aspx?laurID=10)

Free Josh Fattal, Shane Bauer, Sarah Shourd—the young US hikers detained in Iran!

Josh Fattal is the younger brother of Alex Fattal, the Fellow from Duke’s University, who produced the spectacular photo-documentary *VISIONS & VOICES: RIGHTS AND REALITIES Children in South Africa* for the Children’s Rights Centre a few years ago. Children throughout South Africa will remember Alex and how he lived among them and shared their lives!

On July 31, 2009, Josh, Shane and Sarah and were hiking near the Ahmed Awa waterfall in Iraqi Kurdistan when news reports say they mistakenly crossed the unmarked border into Iran. Since then, they have been detained in Iran and have had no contact with their families. They were in Iraqi Kurdistan on a hiking vacation and had no intention of entering Iran. They all have great respect for different cultures and societies and for the law. If they did enter Iran, it can only have been by accident.

The families, friends and supporters of Josh, Shane and Sarah share the deep hope that the Islamic Republic of Iran will show compassion in this unfortunate case and release them as soon as possible.

The Children’s Rights Centre joins with their families to appeal for signatures on the petition for their release, which will be delivered to the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Mission to the United Nations. You will find the petition at www.freethehikers.org