



News-bytes on Children's Rights

Children's Rights Centre April 2008

Prevention of Mother-to-Child-Transmission of HIV

Hot Topics:

- Saving mother's and babies' lives with ART
- Schools' Pledge
- Bill of Responsibilities for Youth

Save babies' and Mothers' lives

The new Guidelines for PMTCT have been published by the Department of Health and will come into force from April 1st. We deplore the delay that has cost the lives of thousands of babies – and we ask every concerned citizen to encourage women to take advantage of the Guidelines – get tested – get treated if necessary – save babies' lives!

Central to the new policy is the introduction of a prevention treatment with TWO antiretrovirals, nevirapine plus AZT, for preventing mother-to-child-transmission of HIV (rather than the single-dose nevirapine regimen). Pregnant women enrolled in PMTCT programmes will now receive AZT from 28 weeks of pregnancy until labour and a single dose of nevirapine during labour.

Civil society, health workers, faith organisations, political parties and organised labour will have to mobilise to ensure the PMTCT programme is effectively implemented. Let us use this opportunity to save women's lives and to begin to eliminate infant HIV infections!

Their infants will be given a single dose of nevirapine after birth and short course of AZT for seven days.

Other key features include:

Routinely offered HIV testing for pregnant women. All pregnant women attending antenatal care clinics will now be offered voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) on their first visit. Those women who test HIV-negative will be offered a follow-up test at 34 weeks pregnancy. Those who test HIV-positive will be offered a CD4 count and viral load test at the time of their HIV positive diagnosis.

The initiation onto antiretroviral therapy of all HIV positive expecting mothers with CD4 counts of 200 cells/mm³ and below.

The routine testing of infants for HIV in order to establish the effectiveness of the new PMTCT interventions. All babies known to be HIV exposed will be tested for HIV at six weeks using PCR testing and will also receive an antibody test at 18 months.

In this issue:

Guidelines for PMTCT 1

CHANN—children's sector HIV network 2

National HIV Health-Care Worker Hotline 2

Schools' Pledge & Bill of Responsibilities 3

Page for Children & Young People 4

There are still several issues that need your lobbying:

1. Pregnant women who are living with HIV need earlier access to ARV treatment

There are significant health advantages for pregnant women who access antiretroviral therapy at CD4 cell counts of **350 cells/mm³** rather than **200 cells/mm³**. Earlier access to treatment is a way of saving women's lives.

2. 'Cover-the-tail' strategy: babies and mothers need the ARV drug lamivudine at birth and immediately after birth, to reduce the risk of nevirapine resistance.

The antiretroviral drug lamivudine (3TC), is a safe, effective and inexpensive addition to AZT given both during birth as an HIV prevention, as well as after birth as a means of reducing the risk of nevirapine resistance. It has been named the 'cover-the-tail' strategy!

3. Critical to the success of the PMTCT programme is improved uptake. Every individual and family has a right to know how mothers' and babies' lives can be saved.

4. PMTCT does not occur in a vacuum! Every community and family needs to have the knowledge and skills and commitment to live a healthy life. Children and fathers also need to be tested & treated!

News-bytes on Children's Rights

The Children's Sector HIV/AIDS National Network—CHANN

Monitoring Children with CHANN

NSP Monitoring and Evaluation

One of the objectives of the Children's Sector Network is to support and strengthen monitoring and evaluation of child related inputs, outputs and outcomes of the National HIV/AIDS and STI Strategic Plan for South Africa 2007-2011. A meeting was held on the 19th of February 2008. It brought together child rights activists, practitioners and technical experts to:

- Share information
- Identify & prioritise M&E activities
- Establish a technical reference team to support Chil-

dren's Sector Network M&E activities

'Dashboard' indicators

for children for which quality information could feasibly be collected:

- Are children spotlighted on the national HIV/AIDS agenda
- What success is there in addressing the impact of HIV and AIDS on children?

For a detailed report on any CHANN meetings please contact the CHANN Secretariat at meera@crc-sa.co.za

A New Name for the Network

The provisional name CHANN stands for Children's Sector HIV/AIDS National Network. This name has been chosen because it does NOT include the word SANAC, and this will avoid confusion. This name will be finalised at this year's National Summit in June. If you have any name suggestions please send it to Meera LeVine at the CHANN secretariat, meera@crc-sa.co.za

NATIONAL HIV HEALTH-CARE WORKER HOTLINE

'The centre is staffed by specially-trained and highly-skilled drug information pharmacists'

Do you have health-care workers in your organisation or network that need help and advice in treating HIV patients or using anti-retrovirals?

They can call the

TOLL-FREE NATIONAL HIV HEALTH CARE WORKER HOTLINE

0800 212506

The toll-free national HIV health care worker hotline provides information on telephonic, faxed or e-mailed queries relating to:

- HIV testing
- Post exposure prophylaxis: health care workers and sexual assault victims
- Management of HIV in pregnancy, and prevention of mother-to-child transmission
- Antiretroviral Therapy (when to initiate; Treatment selection; Recommendations for

laboratory and clinical monitoring; How to interpret and respond to laboratory results; and Management of adverse events)

- Drug interaction
- Treatment and prophylaxis of opportunistic infections
- Drug availability
- Adherence support

Staffing

The centre is staffed by specially-trained and highly-skilled drug information pharmacists who share 46 years of drug information experience between them.

They have direct access to:

- The clinical expertise of consultants at the University of Cape Town's Faculty of Health Sciences, Groote Schuur Hospital and the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital
- An international network of experts, and global resources including those of the World Health Organisation.

- The latest information databases and reference sources.

The Medicines Information Centre (MIC) started this toll-free national HIV hotline for all health care workers in South Africa, to answer enquiries related to patient treatment.

This hotline is being run in collaboration with the Foundation for Professional Development and USAID/PEPFAR.

Support rational treatment

The MIC is part of the University of Cape Town's Faculty of Health Sciences. It is the largest and only clinically-based medicine information centre in South Africa and provides information to both public and private sector health care professionals. Established in 1980, it makes a valuable contribution towards supporting rational treatment in South Africa. All queries to the Centre are documented, referenced and stored for five years.

The hotline operates from Mondays to Fridays 8.30am – 4.30pm

Schools' Pledge

THE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS CENTRE POSITION ON THE SCHOOLS' PLEDGE

We support the **objectives** behind the Pledge namely that levels of violence and disruption in our schools need to be reduced, and that children and young people should be involved in this process.

The objective of building national unity is also laudable.

BUT

We oppose the daily recitation of a schools pledge on principle

Any pledge that has to be recited daily by all children in schools violates the child's right to his or her own opinion and may well provoke justified resentment.

We also oppose the Pledge because mere recitation does not build values nor motivate children to apply these values, and a daily recitation becomes boring and meaningless.

A Pledge is superficial and does not help to reinforce human values in an active, meaningful way – children need to get to grips with the values and to own the process.

As we oppose it in principle, we do not comment on the content or wording of the Pledge.

THE NATIONAL SCHOOL PLEDGE

We the youth of South Africa

Recognising the injustices of our past, honour those who suffered and sacrificed for justice and freedom.

We will respect and protect the dignity of each person, and stand up for justice

We sincerely declare that we shall uphold the rights and values of our constitution

and promise to act in accordance with the duties and responsibilities

that flow from these rights.

! KE E: / XARRA / / KE

Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika.

The daily recitation of a school pledge violates the child's right to his or her own opinion

“Bill of Responsibilities for the Youth of SA”

THE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS CENTRE POSITION ON THE SO-CALLED 'BILL OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR YOUTH OF SA'

It is a mistake to try to glue a particular responsibility onto a right, as if the right depends on good conduct.

Human rights do NOT depend on good behaviour. When the 'Bill of Responsibilities' implies that a right is earned by good behaviour it is mistaken, and undermines the fundamental, inalienable human rights guaranteed by our Constitution.

Calling this document a 'Bill of Responsibilities' and so setting it up on an equal footing with the 'Bill of Rights' in our Constitution is very questionable, indeed.

We believe that responsibilities are not the opposite of rights, but that children have the RIGHT to be brought up to be responsible, the RIGHT to learn values, and the RIGHT to be taught

what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour.

We believe that according to their age and capacity children and young people have a RIGHT to be included in society, as partners with adults in sharing responsibility for building a better world for all.

A code of conduct for ALL at the school – learners, educators and all staff, and parents and Management Boards - is more just and also more constructive approach!

Rights are intrinsically about good relationships and building partnerships. Some rights are in conflict with one another, in fact, and these conflicts need to be resolved peacefully: Individual rights in relation to group rights, parents' rights to children's rights, educators' rights to learners' rights.

Cooperation, goodwill and common goals need to be established so that we can build harmony and move away from violence in our society.

FAQ:

What are the legal ramifications of the 'Bill of Responsibilities'?

There are no legal ramifications. The title "Bill" is inaccurate and confusing to many. The document is not a "Bill" to be passed as an Act of Parliament, but a declaration to be undertaken by individuals who wish to do so.

How does it compare with new Children's Act?

The *Children's Act* was passed in order to afford children -

... the necessary protection and assistance so that they can fully assume their responsibilities within the community; and so that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment and in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding... (from the preamble to the Children's Act)

Calling this document a 'Bill of Responsibilities' and so setting it up on an equal footing with the 'Bill of Rights' in our Constitution is very questionable, indeed.

The full version of the 'Bill of Responsibilities for SA Youth' can be found on

<http://www.sabinet.co.za/sabinetlaw/>

A PAGE FOR CHILDREN

CHILDREN SHOULD BE SEEN AND HEARD! ➔

ARTICLE 12

Whenever adults make a decision that will affect you in any way, you have the right to give your opinion, and the adults must take you seriously.

ARTICLE 13:

You have the right to find out things and say what you think through speaking, writing, art, and so on - unless you go against the rights of others.

(From the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.)

PLEASE SEND YOUR VIEWS AND COMMENTS TO US AND WE WILL PRINT THEM ON THIS PAGE!

Children and young people - YOU have a right to participate and be heard, to have YOUR opinions taken into account and to be part of the democracy of our country.

CELEBRATING SPECIAL DAYS

April 27 - Freedom Day – South Africa

Commemoration of the first democratic elections held in South Africa on 27 April 1994.

THINGS TO DO ON FREEDOM DAY!

Look up the history of South Africa's Freedom struggle—read Nelson Mandela's victory speech here:

<http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mandela/1994/sp940502.html>

where he said:

To the people of South Africa and the world who are watching: this a joyous night for the human spirit. This is your victory too. You helped end apartheid, you stood with us through the transition. I watched, along with all of you, as the tens of thousands of our people stood patiently in long queues for many hours. Some sleeping on the open ground overnight waiting to cast this momentous vote ... free at last!

Ask your parents and teachers where they were when the 1994 elections were held and how they felt on that day.

How would you define what freedom means? Think how our new Constitution brought in human rights with equality and respect for all.

What rights do we all have? Parents' rights, teachers' rights, children's rights – how should we be in partnership to build a better world?

VISIT THE PLAN

website

CHILDREN'S PAGE:

<http://www.plan.org.au/beapartofit/childreneyouth/funinteractivestuff>

Stop Disasters Game » A disaster simulation game where you get to plan and construct a safer environment for your population to help reduce the human, physical and financial cost of disasters such as a tsunami, hurricane, earthquake or fire.

TAKE ACTION WITH UNICEF Voices of Youth (VOY) — Online Art Exhibit

Voices of Youth is a website for children and by children.

It is proud to present its 18@18 Online art exhibit.

Take a look at the art pieces submitted by hundreds of VOY members from around the world, and see what they have to say about their rights. You can navigate from piece to piece, and also e-mail it to friends and family!

Let's continue to spread the word on Child Rights.

Background

In November 20, 2007, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) celebrated its 18th Anniversary, and as part of the activities to commemorate this historic event, Voices of Youth requested its members to choose an article of the Convention and send their artistic interpretation of it. <http://www.unicef.org/voy/takeaction/>



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