

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT AND CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

2nd AFRICAN CONFERENCE ON SOCIAL ASPECTS OF HIV/AIDS RESEARCH

The conference will bring together stakeholders interested in the Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS Research in Africa. The conference is expected to be all embracing of all institutions, networks and alliances and would be widely disseminated through AFRONETS, AFAIDS and other dissemination channels. All interested stakeholders are urged to distribute the announcement of this meeting. The outcome of the African Conference should be of specific interest to researchers and policymakers who would like to promote SAHARA within the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD).

Conference Theme:

"Social Aspects of Access to Care and Treatment"

9-12 May 2004

CAPE TOWN
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE
SOUTH AFRICA

A Unique Opportunity For African Stakeholders
To Discuss Emergent Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS Research

Organised by Human Sciences Research Council,

South Africa

2nd AFRICAN CONFERENCE ON SOCIAL ASPECTS OF HIV/AIDS
RESEARCH CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

SOCIAL ASPECTS OF AIDS RESEARCH ALLIANCE (SAHARA)

The Human Sciences Research Council, is establishing an alliance of partners to conduct, support and use social sciences research to prevent further spread of HIV and mitigate the impact of its devastation on South Africa, the SADC region and sub-Saharan Africa. This Social Aspects of AIDS Research Alliance (SAHARA) is a vehicle for facilitating the sharing of research expertise, sharing knowledge, conducting multi-site and multi-country research projects that are exploratory, cross-sectional, comparative or intervention-based with the explicit aim of generating new social science evidence for prevention, care and impact mitigation of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on individuals, families and communities. This is to be done within the social development framework that takes into account the

cultural environment within which human and social behaviour, and relevant programmes occur. We are beginning to bring key partners in the region, including policy makers, programme planners, researchers in universities and fellow science councils (notably the Medical Research Council in South Africa), NGO's, community groups, donors and multilateral agencies to participate in a flexible alliance for social aspects of AIDS research, each contributing on the basis of its comparative advantage. We are building on existing initiatives (SAHARA West Africa, and SAHARA East & Central Africa) and starting new ones where necessary. We have already secured funding to undertake some of the activities. We now need to extend this further into South Africa, the SADC and other regions of Africa in line with the imperatives and challenges presented by the African Union (AU)'s New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD).

AFRICAN CONFERENCE

The African Conference will be a vehicle to improve the effectiveness of the SAHARA and to integrate its activities more closely with those of other organizations and individuals active in HIV and AIDS control within the African continent, through sharing information on progress and experience on social aspects of HIV/AIDS research. This is particularly so in view of the increase in overall activity anticipated following the recent establishment of the Global Fund against Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria and other international initiatives to mitigate the problem of HIV/AIDS particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. It will identify the barriers to interaction between researchers and decision makers in government ministries so as to enhance the impact of research on effective programmes to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa. The conference will be a unique opportunity for African researchers to make inputs to a continent wide research alliance on social aspects of HIV/AIDS.

Indeed, the preliminary results that are available from different research sites in Africa may be especially valuable to inform the development of appropriate and comprehensive locally initiated HIV and AIDS control strategies. Leading researchers and policy makers, representatives of UN agencies, non-governmental health and development organizations will be invited to participate, offer their perspectives, and government officials to provide insights into the decision-making processes.

Thematic keynote presentations will be from outstanding researchers from the Africa region. They will be challenged to link research to a practical action agenda for HIV/AIDS prevention strategies that involve local communities and people living with AIDS or are affected by it.

The proposed nine thematic tracts of the conference are:

1. Nutrition and food security
2. Policies of access to care
3. Stigma in relation to care
4. Cultural and communal mobilization
5. Human Rights ? legal and Customary Law issues related to care

6. Drug and trade related issues
7. The financing of AIDS
8. Orphans and vulnerable children
9. HIV surveillance

Participants will be challenged to examine specific operational research questions such as whether urban-based or rural-based programmes are more effective in reducing HIV infection in rural areas and what are the information gaps. Can bar-based and workplace peer education and condom distribution activities reduce the high HIV infection rates seen in young women? What are the implications of condoms for family planning in the era of HIV/AIDS? Do school education or membership of community groups help young women to avoid HIV? Do paternal and maternal orphan hood harm the educational opportunities of boys and girls? How effective are HIV intervention programmes in reaching marginalized groups such as disabled persons and street kids?

Papers accepted for presentation will be considered and published in the Journal of Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS Research that is being published with

support of SAHARA. This should serve as a catalyst for broader discussion of an action agenda by SAHARA for promoting HIV/AIDS research issues that concern the African continent. Specific follow-up implementation activities for turning words into action will be proposed and to bring together African researchers, policymakers and programme planners to forge continent wide-alliances and with donors and collaborating partners in the north to facilitate HIV/AIDS social research that is effective and can lead to measurable interventions.

About 300 participants are expected to attend the Conference, from research institutions, national and international organizations, NGOs, and donor agencies. To ensure that the conference offers an African perspective, we have encouraged the regional SAHARA centers in Africa to forward prospective names from their respective regions to the conference. We envisage a geographical breakdown as follows:

Central Africa : 9 Speakers, 41 delegates

East Africa : 9 Speakers, 41 delegates

West Africa : 9 Speakers, 41 delegates

Southern Africa : 9 Speakers, 141 delegates (41 from neighbouring

SADC countries and 100 from South Africa)

English and French are the official languages of the Conference.

There will be skills workshops and community outreach trips offered on all the full days of the Conference and will occur from 13:00 until 17:00 daily

ABSTRACTS, PAPERS AND POSTERS

The theme of the Conference is Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS Research:

Promoting an African Alliance to Mitigate the Effects of HIV/AIDS on a

Sustainable Basis. Authors are invited to present abstracts of

papers/posters that address the theme of the Conference to link behavioural

and social aspects of HIV/AIDS research and interventions in African

populations.

CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

Ø To brief researchers, policy and decision makers, donors and other interested stakeholders about the work of the Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS Research Alliance (SAHARA) advised by a reference group of key stakeholders from relevant sectors.

Ø To share emerging results from research sites in Africa on the social aspects of HIV/AIDS research including scientific evaluation of HIV/STD prevention activities and lessons learnt in the course of implementing programme activities.

Ø To strengthen linkages, collaboration, and coordination of SAHARA, in

order to make it an effective broad-based research network, and a flexible alliance of research partners committed to conducting or supporting quality research necessary for urgent policy planning and implementation.

Ø To issue policy briefs on all the thematic tracts to policy makers, government representatives and inter-governmental bodies

METHODOLOGY AND CONFERENCE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The themes of the Conference will be discussed through keynote commissioned papers, plenary sessions, panel discussions, and workshops.

Ø Keynote Commissioned papers on thematic and substantive issues on Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS in Africa.

Ø Plenary sessions: These will include selected scientific reports from researchers and other stakeholders responding to call for papers for the Conference. .

Ø Workshops on Electronic Networking in Africa and links to projects on research databases such as SHARED, AFRONETS and AFRO-AIDS INFO PORTAL.

Ø Constituency meetings of agencies such as SAHARA Reference Group etc

Ø Scientific exhibitions by invitation only.

Ø An editorial structure for the abstracts will be established so that at the end of the conference, policy briefs are issued on all the thematic tracts.

Abstract submission for papers and workshops

Deadline for abstract submission is: 20 March 2004

Communication about acceptance of abstracts: 31 March 2004

Format of abstract is: 300 words, Background, Method, Results and Conclusion

Submit abstracts to: Prof Karl Peltzer, Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS & Health, Human Sciences Research Council, Private Bag X9182, Cape Town 8000, South Africa

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Conference chair, information and organization:

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