



Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

**UNAIDS**

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**UN Theme Group on  
HIV/AIDS in Nigeria**

**Press release**

## **UN Roundtables and Satellite Sessions at ICASA 2005**

**Abuja, Nigeria, 31 October 2005** – Culture and HIV/AIDS is the focus of one of the satellite sessions being organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) during ICASA 2005, the 14<sup>th</sup> International Conference on AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections in Africa (ICASA), which will take place from 4<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> December 2005 in Abuja.

There has been an increasing engagement with culture in seeking to understand and come to terms with the spread of HIV/AIDS, from considering cultural sensitivities in interventions to employing cultural structures in campaigns. This UNESCO satellite session will examine other dimensions of culture, the need to see culture as a resource in the fight against the epidemic - improved understanding of cultural dynamics and the use of that knowledge as a basis for building prevention strategies. This is within the framework of the joint UNESCO/UNAIDS project "A Cultural Approach to HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care".

Women living with HIV/AIDS in Africa today stand out as the real heroines. Even in the face of heightened vulnerability, burden of care, the feminization of poverty and consequent lack of access to services including treatment and care, positive women in Africa have shown leadership, eking out a living and providing care and support for members of their immediate and extended families. There is overwhelming evidence that if women are empowered with advocacy and other skills, there will be increased participation in decision-making.

At ICASA 2005, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) will support a roundtable on Women Living with HIV/AIDS. This will be facilitated by a woman living with HIV/AIDS, with discussants from all regions of Africa, and will highlight key issues on advocacy, leadership roles, service provision, access to treatment, stigma and discrimination, and foster networking and collaboration across Africa. UNIFEM will also pay attention to the millions of women providing care to people living with AIDS and children affected by AIDS in Africa, sharing empirical evidence on the practice of, and experiences on HIV/AIDS care work by African women.

UNICEF brings the African child into focus at ICASA 2005, accentuating Executive Director Ann Veneman's call to "continue uniting for children – to put a child's face on the pandemic." As part of its campaign against AIDS, UNICEF will host roundtables on scientific advances in the prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV (PMTCT), the impact of the epidemic on orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) and current approaches to pediatric HIV/AIDS management. These roundtables will draw attention to worldwide effort in raising awareness, commitment and resources to halt the epidemic's destruction of young lives. According to UNAIDS Executive Director, Dr. Peter Piot, "If countries are to develop, we must put children first. Children must therefore be a major priority when it comes to the way we allocate and use our resources."

With a total of 15 roundtables and 19 satellite sessions being organized by several organizations within the UN System at ICASA 2005, and with subjects ranging from prevention and treatment to information dissemination and business coalitions, the UN would have further underscored its commitment to active participation and contribution to the response to AIDS and development in Africa.

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