To address the gender dimension of HIV and reproductive health rights, GlobalPOWER Women Network Africa held a High Level Meeting of African Women Parliamentarians and leaders from 24-25 May 2012 in Harare, with the support of the UN Country Team in Zimbabwe. The first set of stories speak to the theme of Health with a specific focus on HIV and Reproductive Health and Immunisation. This issue also highlights United Nations activities, which include the official visit to Zimbabwe of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the launch of “Wednesday @ UNIC”, and the ZUNDAF Mid-Year Review. Following stories address thematic issues of Family Planning and Population, the Rights of Children, Sustainable Development, Food Security as well as Humanitarian Action.

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UN Supports “Harare Call to Action” to Promote HIV, Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights

Africa still bears an inordinate share of the global HIV burden. Particularly, young women aged 15-24 are most vulnerable to HIV with infection rates twice as high as in young men and accounting for 22% of all new HIV infections. More women than men are living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa, accounting for 59% of people living with HIV. Multiple analyses confirm that gender inequality and inequity in resource allocation and service provision are the major drivers of the HIV epidemic. To move from rhetoric to concrete action in addressing the gender dimension of HIV and reproductive health rights, the GlobalPOWER Women Network Africa, in...
collaboration with the African Union and the United Nations, brought together women parliamentarians and leaders from across Africa from 24-25 May 2012 in Harare. This event and its outcomes were supported by the UN in Zimbabwe including UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women and WHO.

The high level meeting was held under the theme “Getting to Zero in Africa: Accelerating Action for Women Empowerment and Gender Equality in the area of HIV and Sexual & Reproductive Health Rights”. At the end of the two day meeting participants came up with the “Harare Call to Action”.

The “Harare Call to Action” pledges to strengthen support for women and girls through national institutions and through African Union mechanisms. Participating women leaders also pledged to work with women living with HIV, civil society organisations and women traditional and cultural leaders.

“The Harare Call to Action” further stipulates that women leaders will “advocate for an increase in budget for programmes that address women’s issues and play an active role in oversight”, which has been an obstacle in Africa. Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Nigeria’s Minister of Finance stressed, “We can make a difference in Africa, and change is already happening—but [we] women have to push harder for greater change because no one can do it for us. This is why GlobalPOWER Africa is so important. We need our women leaders to call for investment in women and girls and monitor how money is spent.”

UN Contributes to Reducing Child Mortality

The Zimbabwe Demographic Health Survey (2010-11) indicates that the under-five mortality rate in the country stands at 84 deaths per 1000 live births (MDG target is 27/1000 by 2015). Most of these children die of preventable diseases, including pneumonia, which is the third leading cause of death in children under five after new-born disorders and AIDS.

To address preventable diseases, WHO and UNICEF supported the national immunization campaign from 18-22 June, providing more than 2 million children with polio and measles vaccines as well as vitamin A supplementation. The coverage was a success with 102% for oral polio vaccine, 99% for vitamin A, and 103% for measles, above the target of 80%.

Meanwhile, on 26 July, the Government of Zimbabwe with the support from UNICEF, WHO and USAID introduced the Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (known as PCV 13) in clinics around the country to combat the world’s leading killer of children under five. This vaccine will protect children from pneumonia, meningitis, sepsis, and in some cases from deafness, thereby reduce child mortality and morbidity.

“It is no longer acceptable for any child to die from a preventable disease,” said Peter Salama, UNICEF Representative. “The introduction of the Pneumococcal vaccine in Zimbabwe is another sign that Zimbabwe’s health sector is well on the road to recovery.”

The introduction of the new vaccine is largely made possible through donations from the governments of Italy, the United Kingdom, Canada, the Russian Federation, and Norway as well as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Globally, including Zimbabwe, 90 million children will benefit from the USD 1.5 billion Immunization Programme which runs from 2011 - 2015.
First Visit of a UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to Zimbabwe

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, conducted an official visit to Zimbabwe from 21-25 May 2012 with a message on the need to advance all human rights (economic, political, social and cultural rights) comprehensively.

During her visit, the High Commissioner met with senior Government Officials, Parliamentarians, the UN Country Team, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Civil Society Organizations, Women’s organisation, and conducted field visits. She also gave a lecture on Human Rights at the University of Zimbabwe and held a press briefing with local and international media at the end of her mission.

Pillay noted in her meetings that people everywhere want to be able to fend for themselves, to provide food, shelter and healthcare for themselves, and want to be able to send their children to school. This is the idea of dignity that is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to which the international community, including Zimbabwe, has subscribed.

Human experience demonstrates that the long term investment of capital, access to credit and the development of property are all necessary for economic growth and development.

“The realization of economic, social and cultural rights are difficult when there is an atmosphere of repression, fear and rampant human rights abuse”, Pillay said. “Respecting all human rights is therefore crucial.”

Her visit followed Zimbabwe’s successful participation in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, a peer review mechanism aimed at appraising and improving the human rights records of all UN member states.

The United Nations Country Team in Zimbabwe provided support to the Government of Zimbabwe, to the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, as well as to Civil Society Organisation for their participation in the UPR process. On the occasion of the adoption of Zimbabwe’s UPR Report by the Human Rights Council, the Zimbabwe delegation noted that human rights should be viewed unselectively, objectively and in an un-politicized manner, and called for serious discussion, consideration and acceptance of social, economic and cultural rights. During the UPR exercise, Zimbabwe accepted 130 out of the 177 recommendations made.

“UN works in a coordinated manner to support the implementation of the UPR National Plan of Action.”

To chart a road map for the implementation of the UPR recommendations endorsed by the Government, the United Nations supported national consultations. Speaking at the occasion, the UN Resident Coordinator, Alain Noudehou said, “The United Nations supports human rights as an end in itself, and a means for peace and development.”

The Resident Coordinator underlined that the UN will continue to work in a coordinated manner to support the implementation of the UPR National Plan of Action, aimed at the implementation of the 130 accepted recommendations.
United Nations in Zimbabwe Launches “Wednesday@UNIC”

The United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) in Harare provides up-to-date information and material on the aims and activities of the United Nations in political, economic, social and humanitarian fields through a well maintained library and online information services. UNIC is open to the public and is located in the city centre.

To enhance its outreach capacity, the United Nations in Zimbabwe launched “Wednesday@UNIC” to share UN perspectives on development issues with a focus on progress on the Millennium Development Goals.

Since the launch of “Wednesday @ UNIC” earlier this year, two public discussions were held featuring topics on Health MDGs and on Ensuring Environmental Sustainability on 25 April and 14 June 2012, respectively. Each session was attended by over 50 participants from Government, NGOs, the media, UN staff, and the general public.

Health MDGs

WHO Representative, Dr Custodia Mandlhate, presented an update on the status of the health-related MDGs which include Reducing Child Mortality (MDG4), Improving Maternal Health (MDG 5), and Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and Other Diseases (MDG 6) – in Zimbabwe. Overall, Dr Mandlhate commended the progress in halting and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS and malaria, but also pointed to challenges still remaining in reducing the incidences of child and maternal mortality and tuberculosis.

To resuscitate and sustain health services in Zimbabwe and support the country to achieve the health MDGs, United Nations support ensured that 90% of all health facilities were supplied and sustained with essential drugs and also contributed to the elimination of user fees.

Environment Sustainability

During the second Wednesday@UNIC, the UNDP Country Director, Christine Umutoni said that the UN was supporting Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Flagship Programme with a development grant worth USD 14 million. In addition, the United Nations, through the Zimbabwe United Nations Development Assistance (ZUNDAF) 2012-2015, is supporting national efforts to develop a national climate change strategy and a disaster risk management bill.

Zimbabwe is endowed with abundant natural resources that include rich mineral deposits, wildlife, arable lands, forests, and surface and groundwater resources. However, the country faces multiple environmental challenges, including biodiversity loss, poor waste management, pollution, and land and forest degradation.

To address environmental challenges in Zimbabwe, the United Nations advocates for smart public policies which generate decent employment and accelerated social progress in a sustainable way.

The next Wednesday@UNIC is planned for 26 September on Peace and Development issues. The Guest speaker is Prof. Luc Rukingama, Director and Representative of UNESCO in Zimbabwe.
Monitoring the 2012-2015 ZUNDAF for Coherent UN Action

The 2012-2015 Zimbabwe United Nations Development Assistance Framework (ZUNDAF) is the UN’s strategic programme framework to support national development priorities articulated under the 2011-2015 Medium Term Plan (MTP) as well as the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

The ZUNDAF is designed at a strategic level to provide the Government of Zimbabwe and the UN Country Team with a flexible and agile framework, incorporating principles of recovery and development.

In order to ensure that UN actions remain coherent and delivers targeted results, monitoring and evaluation efforts have been enhanced jointly with Government.

Joint UN monitoring and evaluation efforts strengthened

Accordingly, the first monitoring exercise of the 2012-2015 cycle was held in the form of a Mid-Year Review. This allowed ZUNDAF Thematic Groups, which are aligned to the national priority areas, to assess progress, identify constraints and challenges, and chart the way forward.

To further support strong monitoring of the ZUNDAF, the UN also held a training for Government and UN officials on M&E, Results Based Management, and Human Rights Based Approach to Programming.

The review showed that in the first six months of 2012-2015 ZUNDAF implementation, 64% of the results are on track, 4% are met, and the remainder are facing challenges which are being addressed.

In addition, the review allowed for UN agencies to jointly refine and update funding requirements for outcomes of the 2012-2015 ZUNDAF to be addressed. As such, the ZUNDAF is costed at approximately USD 1.5 billion for a 4 year period, with close to USD 1 billion mobilized and approximately USD 500 million yet to be mobilized.

The ZUNDAF promotes the enhancement of partnerships while advancing national ownership.

The UN engages with Development Partners for improved resource mobilisation opportunities and results and increasingly encourages donors to provide funding to programme and priority areas in a holistic manner to ensure effective achievement of results.

Two thirds of ZUNDAF required resources mobilised, with USD 500 million remaining

Linkages are strengthened between coordination mechanisms, such as ZUNDAF Thematic Groups and Humanitarian Clusters, seeking to capitalize on opportunities for alignment to nationally led sectors. The linkages also enhance the complementarity of programme planning instruments and resource mobilization mechanisms and approaches.
Building Partnerships for Universal Access to Family Planning

According to the 2010/11 Zimbabwe Demographic Health Survey, by age 19, nearly a quarter of girls would have already started child bearing. About 211,000 married women in Zimbabwe who want to delay or avoid becoming pregnant do not have access to modern methods of contraception.

Reducing this number by half can avert an estimated 780,000 unintended pregnancies, 110,500 unsafe abortions and 4,200 maternal deaths by 2020. Improving the availability and access to voluntary family planning services is one key strategy that can accelerate this reduction.

More than 300 people gathered at the Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council on 11 July to commemorate World Population Day under the theme ‘Universal Access to Reproductive Health Services: Re-energising family planning in Zimbabwe’. The theme was a call to all stakeholders to urgently re-position and reaffirm their commitments towards universal access to sexual and reproductive health, in particular family planning.

Delivering the United Nations message, Felix Bamezon, WFP Representative and Country Director said, “Besides family planning being a human right, it can reduce unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and maternal deaths and disabilities, saving women’s lives and those of their children.”

At the event, the UK Government announced a USD 90 million (GBP 57 million) investment for a four year programme aimed at supporting integrated sexual and reproductive health services. “This gesture, as well as efforts by the Government and its partners, underlines a strong commitment to realising the right to family planning and ensuring that more Zimbabweans have reliable access to basic health services,” said Louise Robinson, UKAID Basic Health Adviser. On their part, USAID announced a USD 10 million investment over a period of five years to expand access to comprehensive family planning information and services particularly for rural and hard-to-reach populations.

Accordingly, the United Nations in Zimbabwe, led by UNFPA, supported the Government in the preparation of a national position paper on family planning which was launched at the London Family Planning Summit in July 2012. Following the launch, the Government committed to increasing the health budget allocated to support family planning services, including the procurement of contraceptive commodities from the current 1.7% to 3%. “We as Government will strive to improve the family planning policy environment, increase budgetary allocations and strengthen family planning service delivery for vulnerable groups including adolescents”, said Dr Mhlanga, the Principal Director, Preventive Service within the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare.
Protecting the Rights of Children in Zimbabwe

A 2008 survey revealed that the worst forms of child labour do exist in Zimbabwe as evidenced by the participation of children in mining, agriculture, hazardous domestic work, and illicit activities. Empirical evidence suggests that effective education and training policies backed by social protection measures can produce significant increases in school enrolment and accordingly decline child labour.

As such, the United Nations, led by UNICEF, continues to support children’s right to education. A recently concluded initiative saw UNICEF support to Government in the distribution of 15 million text books, reaching a 1:1 pupil textbook ratio from 1:10 ratio in primary and secondary schools. In addition, to contribute to social protection measures, the United Nations provides cash transfers to over 80,000 vulnerable households in some of the poorest districts of the country.

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the World Day Against Child Labour, ILO Director in Zimbabwe, Alphonse Tabi Abodo said, “The largest gap between commitment and action is more pronounced in the informal economy, where the majority of violations of fundamental labour rights occur.” He further noted that children in rural and agricultural areas, as well as children of migrant workers were most vulnerable to being caught in child labour.

There is a strong commitment among key stakeholders in Zimbabwe to urgently and progressively reduce incidences of child labour, protect working children and to work towards the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, as defined in the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention of 1999 ratified by Zimbabwe on 11 December 2000. Globally, the reality remains extremely worrying with 215 million children still trapped in child labour, 115 million of them in the worst forms.


The ratification of this Protocol will support legislative and policy procedures aimed at eliminating challenges faced by children with disabilities like violence and abuse; social attitudes; stigma and discrimination; and poor access to education.

At the commemoration, the First Lady, Amai Grace Mugabe, joined hundreds of children living with disabilities at the UNICEF office grounds in Harare. “Children with disabilities, like any other children, need love, care and protection to realize their full potential in life,” said the First Lady. “This year’s Day of the African Child is an opportunity for us to raise awareness on our collective responsibility as Zimbabweans to uphold their rights, and ensure that they too can realize their dreams and goals in life.”
UN Calls For a Paradigm Shift to Ensure Sustainable Development

The 2012 Rio+20 conference on sustainable development concluded amid a growing chorus in Zimbabwe to explore various options in which the country can benefit from a transformation to a green economy – a major theme of the conference. Rio+20 recognized that urgent action on unsustainable patterns of production and consumption remains fundamental to addressing environmental sustainability and promoting conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems, regeneration of natural resources, and the promotion of sustained, inclusive and equitable global growth.

The UN in Zimbabwe provided technical and financial support to develop the Zimbabwe National Report for Rio+20, and sponsored participation of Government officials. In addition, coordinated UN support has been provided to assist the Government in developing a national response to the outcomes of Rio+20, in the form of a sustainable development action plan.

Government, seeking to shape new policies to promote global prosperity, reduce poverty and advance social equity and environmental protection. Over 50 million people from all over the world took part in Rio+20 conference through social media platforms.

2 UN Flagship Programmes focused on sustainable development

Member States, including Zimbabwe, renewed their commitment to sustainable development; agreed to establish universal sustainable development goals; affirmed the importance of gender empowerment, the right to water and food, and the need to address poverty.

In a ‘brown bag’ session on “Green Economy: Whither Zimbabwe” held in advance of Rio+20 and facilitated by the United Nations Development Programme, participants echoed a similar view, calling for a paradigm shift in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda. In a green economy, said UNDP Deputy Country Director for Programmes, Martim Maya, “there’s no trade-off between development and environment quality since global economic growth under ‘business as usual’ will be constrained by scarcity of resources and energy.”

In his contribution, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Investment Promotion, Dr Desire Sibanda, noted that Zimbabwe’s development blueprint, known as the Medium Term Plan subscribes to the implementation of policies that promote a green economy.

Through the 2012-2015 Zimbabwe UN Development Assistance Framework, a UN Flagship Programme on Community Action for Adaptation and Mitigation of Climate Change is also being developed to address some of the major environmental issues being faced. Likewise, a UN Flagship Programme on Promoting Economic Recovery through Enhanced Entrepreneurship and Employment for Youth and Women was recently signed and launched by the Government and the UN, addressing some of the social dimensions of sustainable development.

Rio+20 saw the participation of approximately 40,000 people – including some 100 Heads of State and

(L-R) Martim Maya, UNDP Deputy Country Director for Programmes; Desire Sibanda, PS of Ministry of Economic Planning and Investment Promotion; and Lew Kwang-Chul, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Zimbabwe.
UN Supports Government to Address Food Insecurity

In 2012, a key humanitarian priority requiring particular attention is that of food security. The lean season set in beginning of September, with over 1.6 million Zimbabweans facing food shortages during the peak period between January – March 2013.

To respond to this situation, the UN World Food Programme has partnered with the Government of Zimbabwe to provide transportation and distribution for 35,000 metric tonnes of food from the national strategic grain reserve. WFP will also be complementing this food with oil, pulses, regionally procured cereals and cash transfers in some areas. The geographic areas and levels of food insecurity are identified by the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC) rural livelihood assessment. ZimVAC is an objective process which carries out annual household surveys to understand the food security situation, among several other livelihood components.

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The UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Alain Noudehou, addressing the humanitarian community at the CAP mid year review.

WFP has partnered with the Government to transport & distribute 35,000 metric tonnes of food

It is Government led, in close collaboration with UN agencies, donors, NGOs, and is chaired by the Food and Nutrition Council.

The United Nations in Zimbabwe has thus begun approaching WFP Headquarters and the donor community to mobilise the funds required for WFP’s Seasonal Targeted Assistance programme, which includes approximately US$5 million for transport and distribution costs of the Government grain.

National production of maize (the main staple cereal) decreased by 33% during the 2011/2012 agricultural season. In addition, 43% of the crops planted were written off because of drought and poor rain distribution. The rates of chronic and acute child malnutrition stand at 32% and 3% respectively.

At the 2012 Mid-Year Review of the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP), held to calibrate and streamline humanitarian action, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator – Alain Noudehou said, “The prevailing food insecurity situation is likely to remain with us, which calls for careful planning and close collaboration between the Government and humanitarian actors to ensure that effective and innovative solutions are found”. This was further highlighted by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Regional Integration and International Cooperation - Thadeus Chifamba, “Given the dry spell across the country and its debilitating effect, there is need to give serious attention towards food assistance, especially in light of the findings of the Second Round Crop and Livestock Assessment”.

The UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Alain Noudehou, addressing the humanitarian community at the CAP mid year review.
Zimbabwe continues to make steady progress towards recovery and development. However humanitarian challenges do remain. Humanitarian actors therefore remain vigilant and alert, continuously assessing priorities in order to continue to provide emergency response where necessary while strengthening national preparedness and response capacity.

The major outcome of the 2012 Mid-Year Review of the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) calls for more effective and streamlined humanitarian appeal and coordination structure which respond to evidence based needs. As such, humanitarian planning in 2013 will be more focused through targeted projects, on issues of food security, the protection of asylum seekers, migrants and other vulnerable groups, and rapid response to disease outbreaks and natural disasters. Moreover, humanitarian structures will be streamlined in a manner which maintains sufficient capacity to respond while strengthening national capacities to lead emergency preparedness and relief efforts.

As per the 2012 CAP Mid-Year Review, requirements amount to approximately USD 238 million, with partners reporting the mobilisation of approximately USD 115 million (48%).

The United Nations in Zimbabwe continues to actively advocate and support effective humanitarian response in support of the Government and in partnership with the humanitarian community. Speaking at World Humanitarian Day, jointly organised by OCHA and WFP on 16 August, Marcelin Hepie, UNHCR Representative commended the humanitarian community’s achievements and emphasized the need for vigilance in the face of constantly emerging challenges. At the occasion, Deputy Minister of Regional Integration and International Cooperation, Reuben Marumahoko, called for sustainable programmes that build resilience rather than dependence on aid.

Meanwhile, celebrating the 2012 World Refugee Day on 29 June in Tongogara Refugee Camp, The Minister of Labour and Social Services, Hon. Paurina Mpariwa, acknowledged the challenges displaced persons often face and declared that Zimbabwe remained willing to receive and host asylum seekers.

The UNHCR Representative commended the Government of Zimbabwe for its affirmative policy to accept refugees despite the economic challenges the country has been facing and appreciated the joint collaboration with IOM in providing support to Zimbabweans returning from neighbouring countries.

This day was celebrated under the global theme “Dilemma” capturing the realities which individuals in forced displacement have to make: the decision to flee to an unknown destination risking possible starvation, disease and rape or staying behind potentially to face violence and persecution.