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## **Photographs Highlight Zimbabwe's Fight Against Pediatric HIV/AIDS**

### **Exhibition Commemorates 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation**

Harare, Zimbabwe – A photography exhibition highlighting the achievements in expanding and supporting the national HIV prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) programme was showcased today by the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF). The exhibition – held at the National Gallery – was officially opened by the Honorable Minister of Health Dr. Henry Mdzorere and was attended by U.S. Ambassador Donald Petterson, Chargé d'affaires, a.i. Also in attendance were other officials of the Government of Zimbabwe, the U.K. Department for International Development (DFID), United Nations agencies, and international and local AIDS service organizations.

The exhibition was organised by the Zimbabwe EGPAF country team in commemoration of EGPAF's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. From its start, when three mothers sat around a kitchen table in the U.S., EGPAF has grown to now work globally at more than 3,900 sites and in 17 countries. EGPAF is a world leader in supporting children and families in their fight against HIV/AIDS.

The exhibition, a collection of more than 30 compelling photographs, highlights the multiple facets of the PMTCT programme, from provision of health care services to community support initiatives. The exhibit includes the voices of dedicated health care workers, as well as the powerful testimonies of the mothers, fathers, and children who have all been supported by the PMTCT programme.

One such story is that of Patience Mapfumo and Josphat, who explained the impact of the support given through the national PMTCT programme. "I realised I wasn't alone and that my baby didn't have to be born HIV-positive," said Patience. "I did what I was told and I have been blessed with an HIV-free son."

The photographs displayed, however, also include some of the challenges that the programme continues to face, such as lack of disclosure of HIV status and low levels of male involvement, particularly in PMTCT. Pinel Cahuruka, a member of an HIV support group, explained, "Many men come, but at first they don't admit their status. They ask questions and we know they are HIV-positive. We reassure them and help them come to terms with their illness. Our support group is like a family. We sing and dance, we talk and we teach, we laugh and we cry. But everyone is equal."

The EGPAF programme strives to expand access to prevention and treatment programmes for pregnant women and infants. EGPAF's Zimbabwe Family AIDS Initiatives (FAI) programme has been supporting the national PMTCT programme since 2001, using resources provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), DFID, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and Johnson & Johnson.

EGPAF and its three implementing partners – JF Kapnek Trust, the Organization for Public Health Interventions and Development (OPHID), and the Zimbabwe AIDS Prevention Project – have been providing direct support for PMTCT service provision to more than 600 MOHCW health facilities, in more than 28 districts and 3 cities in Zimbabwe. Through their programmes, they have provided PMTCT services to more than 545,000 women. About 66,000 women living with HIV have been identified within the programme, and the majority of these women and their infants have received medicines to prevent HIV transmission.

The FAI programme provides technical and financial resources to the MOHCW to enhance national efforts to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV. The programme directly supports the National AIDS & TB Unit and PMTCT sites throughout the country, with the goal of helping 26,000 pregnant women with HIV to access important PMTCT anti-retroviral medications in the next year alone. In addition, the FAI programme collaborates with the MOHCW in undertaking important operational research to identify innovative solutions to challenges that the national PMTCT programme still faces in reaching as many women and children as possible with lifesaving services.

Throughout its 20th anniversary, the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation is inviting people worldwide to join the moment and commit ourselves to eradicate pediatric AIDS; support women, children, and families living with HIV; and ultimately realise a generation free of HIV. To learn more, visit <http://www.pedaids.org/jointhemoment>.

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#### About the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation

The Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation is a worldwide leader in the fight against pediatric AIDS. Its innovative research programs, collaborative training initiatives, advocacy efforts, and rapidly expanding international prevention and treatment programs are bringing dramatic changes to the lives of children worldwide. To learn more about the Foundation's work in Zimbabwe, visit <http://www.pedaids.org/OurWork/InternationalPrograms/Zimbabwe.aspx>.