

Kigali Meeting on the Multi-Country AIDS Program – June 14, 2007

Opening Remarks

Joy Phumaphi, Vice-President, Human Development Network

I would like to extend a very warm welcome to you all, as you attend this important event. We are extremely grateful for the very warm welcome that we have received from the people of Rwanda, and are privileged to have the first lady here with us today. The Global community continues to learn and benefit from your leadership your Excellency, as you champion, advocate, organize, oversee and advise on critical HIV/AIDS programs.

Today you join us to review the results that 29 countries in Africa have achieved, building on the support of the World Bank Multi Country AIDS Program, and to discuss how best the Bank can continue to support Africa's response to the epidemic.

Our world is living with HIV/AIDS. Every citizen of this planet is either infected or affected. Yet, as the epidemic has turned every single area of development on its head no letters in the alphabet are further apart than the 'i' (in infected) and the 'a' (in affected). The Seven letters in between represent a gulf that defines the global imperative that the challenge poses to us all, fuelled by;

Bias – as social stigma and discrimination continues to hinder access for women, and young people, and excludes people in prisons, and commercial sex workers

Cultural beliefs – that are used as an excuse to trap us in denial

Diminishing well being – which defines our very existence (even with ARVs) as we suffer huge losses in earning potential, productivity, depleted household, trapping us in a vicious cycle.

External shocks – which negate the limited gains that we make, as we grapple with fragmented, conditional support, trade barriers, and brain drain

Financial woes – which hound us as we face short term financing, distorted budgets and erratic planning

Generations – of missed opportunities unfolding like dessert dunes before us, thirsty for the hope that comes with the development of human capital.

Hidden – costs which are revealing themselves constantly, refuting every hard earned victory.

As a Motswana, this epidemic has shaped my life, in every waking moment, and filled my sleep with nightmares; defining my very being.

Today we must explore the other letters of the alphabet.

Our growing openness must serve as a J, as we jump into the K for knowledge, we must use all we have learnt to build on our successes, learning from one another.

We begin today with a short film that recalls the years when HIV/AIDS raged across Africa with no fire breaks to slow it down. The film features a few, but by no means all – of the people who catalyzed the World Bank and valued stakeholders to stir from inaction. It also

features a tiny portion of the hundreds of thousands of people across Africa who have used MAP resources to help others to bridge the gap, to live, to live positively, to raise and care for our children so that Africa can have a brighter future.

The film honors all those in Africa and the Global community – whose work and commitment is enabling the continent to overcome a living hell.

Over the course of the day, we will listen carefully to your comments about how best to move forward. We must be part of this revolution together, as we write a new chapter into the history of this continent; to reflect an Africa that is overcoming HIV/AIDS.

We hope that as you watch this film, you will reflect on how we have walked this hazardous path with you, what we could do to get ahead of the epidemic; and that this will set the stage for rich discussions during the rest of the day.

Your Excellency The first lady, honorable ministers, ambassadors, representatives of African countries, NGOs and Civil Society Organizations of PLWAs, international partners, colleagues, dear guests; allow me to present to you the Africa Multi AIDS Program 2000 - 2006