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Start Early, Start Now: Governments, Health Care Providers and NGOs Urged to Ramp up Efforts to Meet the Needs of the Youngest Children in HIV-Affected Families

Statement from Kate Iorpenda, Chair of The Coalition for Children Affected by AIDS

July 18, 2014, Melbourne, Australia — Today the Coalition for Children Affected by AIDS and The Teresa Group launched a call to action titled “The Melbourne Statement on Young Children Born into HIV-affected Families”. The statement, released at a symposium in advance of the 20th International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2014), calls on global leaders to prioritize the youngest children living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

Kate Iorpenda, Chair of The Coalition for Children Affected by AIDS, made her remarks at the in front of nearly 300 of the top professionals and community leaders working in pediatric treatment and on children affected by HIV.

“For decades, we’ve had robust evidence that investing in children before they are born through to the first eight years is a tremendous short and long-term investment. For children who are born to HIV-positive parents, these years are particularly important,” said Iorpenda.

Professor Lorraine Sherr of University College London, a speaker at the international symposium *Children and HIV: Start Early, Start Now!*, added, “We know with good evidence that any child born into a family affected by HIV faces immediate and longer term biological, environmental and psychosocial challenges. We know that if these challenges are not addressed early, they threaten a child’s ability to cope and thrive. We also know that there are proven interventions that can prevent and mitigate the damaging effects of HIV and AIDS. By integrating clinical and developmental interventions for young children born into families affected by HIV and AIDS, we can provide children at risk with a strong foundation for the rest of their lives.”

The Melbourne Statement, highlights four priority actions for young children affected by HIV:

- Demand and support partnerships to reach the youngest children, especially under three years of age;
- Include early childhood interventions in Global Fund applications—and include specific targets for reaching the most marginalized populations;
- Create policies and budgets for their national plans that support integrated programs for young children; and
- Position early childhood development at the heart of the post-2015 development agenda.

Ms. Iorpenda urged governments, health care providers and NGOs to act on The Melbourne Statement by linking clinic-based and community programs so that the critical early years are not missed.

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The Coalition for Children Affected by AIDS believes that children need to be made a higher priority in the international response to HIV & AIDS. The Coalition brings funders and technical experts together to advocate for the best policy, research, and programs for children because children are a vulnerable population that has too often been overlooked. For more information, and to download The Melbourne Statement on Young Children Born into HIV-Affected Families, please visit ccaba.org/the-melbourne-statement

Field Code Changed