

RHYTHM of LIFE

move to a healthy beat!

16 May 2009

Zambia's first-ever FREE music and arts festival and health fair

Showgrounds, LUSAKA, Zambia

"I personally felt proud to be a Zambian on Saturday. The feedback received so far has been overwhelming... making it an annual event would be a very good strategy for informing our Lusaka community and beyond – as seen on national TV broadcast – through music and art of key health issues."

These were the words of Lillian Mphuka, of the Health Promotion Unit of the Ministry of Health in Zambia, following Rhythm of Life, Zambia's first combined music and arts festival and health fair. The Ministry of Health was a key partner in the day-long celebration supported by the American people and implemented by Health Communication Partnership (HCP) Zambia. Rhythm of Life was designed to bring free preventive health care information, counseling, testing and referral services on a range of health issues to Zambians in both traditional and entertaining ways such as

music, drama, film, dance and art. HCP worked with a range of partners in the field of public health, the National Arts Council, as well as a variety of performing artistes to make this possible. Legendary Z i m b a b w e a n musician Oliver

Mtukudzi headlined the day's concert alongside popular Zambian artists such as Mampfi, Danny, Sakala Brothers, Angela Nyirenda, Maiko Zulu and Mozegater.

Over 12,000 people who were drawn in by the musical superstars, could not help but become part of the day's true theme: preventive health care. In addition to a wealth of information about preventing HIV and malaria, as well as VCT services, health activities included male circumcision counseling and referral, blood pressure and weight checks, and health quizzes with prizes. The event was absolutely free to the

public so as to not exclude anyone from accessing the services or enjoying the day.

Based on information received from partner organizations, over 250 women accessed family planning, maternal and reproductive health counseling and/or services, over 450 accessed HIV counseling and testing services, and 400 people received counseling and/or referrals for male circumcision. In the medical tent run by the University of Zambia medical students, over 300 people accessed the blood pressure, weight, blood sugar and health counseling services. 185 had their eyes tested and 38 donated blood. Partners working on malaria tested 310 people using rapid diagnostic tests. Five people tested positive for malaria and were referred for treatment. Many thousands more took home informational materials on a variety of topics.

The varied and exhilarating performances on stage carried on throughout the day and well into the night, starting at 10 am and ending at 1.30 am the next morning. From the a cappella melodies of B Fas and Kabulonga High School Choir to the colorful and mesmerizing drumming and dancing of the Amaombe and Zuba Ni Moto cultural ensembles and the meaningful and entertaining drama performance by Africa Directions. From the popular, feet-stomping, vernacular hits of John Chiti, Mozegater, Hamoba, Emmie Routes, CQ, Sista D, Mwale Sisters, Brian Chilala, Amayenge and General Ozzy to the gospel-inspired songs of Stan Chipuma, X-ploits and Anointed Power House. From the popular Makewane musical duo, the flashy Sakala Brothers to the dulcet version of the same style rendered by Angela Nyirenda. There was even some great reggae and rap from Maiko Zulu and Cactus



Rhythm of Life concert stage.



VCT tents.



UNZA medical students.



Amaombe.



MC Linzee.

Agony that had the crowds roaring their approval. These were all topped by the two performances by Oliver Mtukudzi and the Black Spirits with their

inimitable brand of 'Tuku Music.' Every single performance conveyed key health messages on a variety of health issues, including family planning, male circumcision, malaria and HIV. Each performer conveyed health information appropriate to their fan following and delivered in the style that suited them best. The impact was all the more powerful through the synergy created by the artistes coming together.

The events of the day, including the speeches and the awards were skillfully coordinated by the stage manager, Brian Chengala Shakarongo, and the three articulate masters of ceremony – Linzee, Mix Master and Kenny T – who kept the schedule moving in military precision. No opportunity was missed to deliver key health messages. Changeovers were used as opportunities to show HCP's educational animated short films on malaria and HIV on the LED side screens.

MCs also interacted with the crowd by asking questions related to key health issues and awarding small prizes for correct answers.

The Ambassador of the United States to Zambia, His Excellency Donald E. Booth and the Deputy Minister of Health, Honorable Mwendoi Akakandelwa, MP, were the guests of honor at Rhythm of Life. After touring the health booths and services on offer, they addressed the gathered crowd of thousands.



Ambassador and Deputy Minister of Health visiting New Start tent.

“More than a quarter of women 15-19 are either mothers or currently pregnant according to the Zambia Demographic and Health Survey of 2007,” said the Deputy Minister of Health. “There is a need to make family planning information and services available to anyone who seeks it, particularly ensuring we have caring and supportive health care providers as well as uninterrupted supply of contraceptive methods even in the most rural areas.”



The Ambassador and the Deputy Minister of Health on stage.

He also emphasized that that more than 85% of Zambians (ZDHS 2007) are HIV negative and we need to do all that we can to help them stay that way. He said, “We need to encourage open discussion between parents and children so that the lack of information

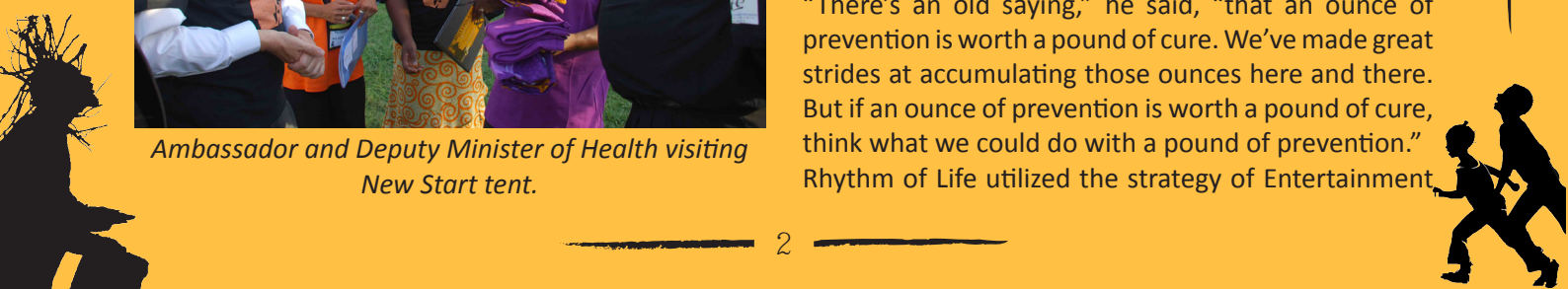


Ambassador Booth during his speech.

is not the reason children start having sex early. We need to promote all the tools we have and know of to prevent HIV – abstinence, partner reduction, condoms, male circumcision, prevention of parent to child transmission of HIV, prevention and treatment of STIs, infection prevention through safe blood and sterilized sharps.” He also talked about key preventive behaviors for malaria, child health, and safe motherhood. He underlined the importance of male involvement in health issues: “Gone are the days when health was just a woman’s responsibility,” he said.

According to Ambassador Booth, “Prevention is essential to a healthier Zambia and to a wealthier Zambia. You cannot go on with treatment as your main battle plan. Treatment costs too much, certainly in terms of dollars and kwacha. But other costs are just as severe. It is missing days of work to treat malaria, instead of spending ten minutes installing a mosquito net. It is spending a lifetime on ART instead of 10 seconds putting on a condom. It is losing years of life to breast or skin cancer instead of setting aside five minutes once a month for a self-exam.”

“There’s an old saying,” he said, “that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. We’ve made great strides at accumulating those ounces here and there. But if an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, think what we could do with a pound of prevention.” Rhythm of Life utilized the strategy of Entertainment



Education, which is grounded in renowned Stanford University psychologist Al Bandura's Social Learning Theory. Leading up to the event a role models workshop was conducted to orient popular performers to key health issues and the important role that they can play in health promotion by utilizing their popular platform. Three days in Siavonga, on the shores of beautiful Lake Kariba, were well spent in sharing these issues and rehearsing the theme song for the concert. It was the first time that all the 'superstars' of the Zambian popular music scene had been brought together in this manner.

A presentation on benefits of male circumcision convinced a handful of the gathered male stars to go for the procedure following the workshop. Mozegater, who has a huge following among Zambian youth, said that he could not tell his fans to go for circumcision without undergoing the procedure himself. He got circumcised six days before the concert and used his performance at Rhythm of Life as an opportunity to tell his fans about the benefits of male circumcision as well as his personal experience with the procedure. This testimonial is certain to play an important role in increasing demand for male circumcision services among Zambian youth.



Art contest winner.



Journalism contest winner.



Siavonga workshop group.

In their workshop evaluation one participant said, "The workshop was an eye opener on health information and a great platform to have artistes unite for a common purpose." Another said, "This workshop is a very important tool to empower artistes and encourage them to be ambassadors carrying the health messages. I hope and trust that lives will be impacted out there through us spreading the message of what we have learned." In the words of another artiste, "I have learned much about health issues and I have learned even more about myself."

Rhythm of Life included a health-themed art exhibit curated by renowned artist Mulenga Chafilwa that showcased the work of talented Zambian sculptors and visual artists. An all-day health-themed art competition for children was judged by a panel of prominent Zambian artists. The prizes for this competition were handed out by the guests of honor during the official part of the day. Prizes for a journalist competition organized by HCP, called "Health in the Headlines," were also given out after the art prizes. Immediately after the prize-giving ceremony, the festival's theme song, called Rhythm of Life, was performed by all the artistes, including Oliver Mtukudzi. Crowds clapped and danced along to the infectious beat and catchy lyrics that also had key messages about health seamlessly included in them.



Rehearsing "Rhythm of Life" song.



The legendary Oliver "Tuku" Mtukuzi.

Oliver "Tuku" Mtukuzi was invited to participate in the event particularly because of his long-standing reputation in the region as a musical icon and as an ambassador of health. He added to the star-studded feel of the day and increased the appeal and profile of the event. "This is a brilliant idea," said Mr. Mtukuzi, "We want to try this in Zimbabwe for sure. As artistes we are a mirror of the people and it is our duty to elaborate issues that people may not understand."

The event was covered by Zambian National Broadcasting Corporation and the popular private TV channel MUVI TV. Key speeches as well as a few of the most popular performers and their messages were transmitted live to television sets around the country during prime time. Advance publicity on radio, print and TV had alerted audiences around the country to tune in between 16:00 and 18:00 hours on Saturday, 16th May, 2009. According to the ZDHS 2007 about 35% of Zambia's 11 million people watch television regularly. Even if half that number was watching television that evening, that is close to two million viewers country-wide.



Art tent.



Live performance of "Rhythm of Life" song.

Satellite activities centering around the live broadcast took place around the country. Some of these were initiated by HCP offices in 22 hard-to-reach districts. In Mansa, for example, the HCP District Program Officer, Francisca Tembo, worked closely with district partners to organize a local health fair on the same day as the Lusaka concert. The fair featured local drama groups and other entertainment, culminating in a joint viewing (by a crowd of over 1,000 people) of the two-hour live television broadcast using mobile video screens installed for this occasion in the local football stadium by the Zambia News and Information Services.

Angela Nyirenda, the Queen of Makewene music in Zambia, summed up the Rhythm of Life event in the following words, "You have seen a lot of people here. They have rushed to listen to the music, but at the end of the day they go home knowing something. This means somebody out there has been protected."



Angela Nyirenda



Concert banner.

HCP Zambia is a five-year project, globally led by Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health – Center for Communication Programs in partnership with Save the Children (US) and International HIV/AIDS Alliance. This program is funded by the United States Government, through the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the U.S. President's Malaria Initiative, and through United States Agency for International Development health funds.



Partner health booths tent.

Weblink to song: <http://www.healthybeatzambia.com>

