



## NEWS RELEASE

# WOYOME FOUNDATION FOR AFRICA

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## International African HIV/AIDS Conference Communiqué

Accra, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2007 – The 1<sup>st</sup> International African HIV/AIDS Conference organised by the Woyome Foundation for Africa under its Africa Life Aid Project with the support of the Ministry of Health Ghana, ended on December 1, 2007, World Aids Day. The conference attracted nearly 200 delegates from 38 African countries, Europe and North America.

It was on the theme, strengthening interventions towards the elimination of HIV/AIDS in Africa.

The meeting offered a rare and unique opportunity for people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, particularly they who suffer abuse and stigmatisation most, to network, share ideas, experiences and offer suggestions for the management of HIV in Africa and for the elimination of AIDS. This was also a rare opportunity to experience a large gathering of people including those living with HIV (PLWHA) and those not infected, and yet they interacted freely, ate together, shook hands, hugged and established new friendships.

Most importantly, the conference offered an opportunity for delegates to examine the best practices for curtailing the spread of the virus in Africa and for keeping PLWHAs alive, healthy and productive. Discussions also centred on the care and support of orphans of AIDS and other vulnerable children, particularly the hundreds of thousands of children infected with HIV, who need medication, counselling and nutritional support.

A unique element of this gathering was not only that they were fully represented, but were also active participants in the process and decision making. For the first time, a potential African funding organization called for recipient countries to actually outline the direction and focus of the funding and mechanism for disbursement.

The conference ended with the adoption of a communiqué that point to the way forward in effectively managing the HIV pandemic in Africa. The communiqué contains broad and strong

recommendations to WOFA and African governments on interventions to scale-up, transfer and replicate existing best practices across the continent.

In consideration of the need:

- To increase advocacy work towards the enforcement of existing policies that address HIV/AIDS;
- To ensure increased access to Anti-Retroviral Therapy in Africa;
- To ensure an improved and sustained Care and Support Program for PLWHAs/ OVCs and their families;
- To reduce the level of stigmatisation and discrimination against HIV/AIDS persons; and
- To encourage Voluntary Counseling and Testing/ Psychosocial Counseling;

Conference participants after three (3) days of deliberations, declared as follows:

- § Support for community-led research into the underlying causes of issues such as dependency, food security, poverty, gender equity, and other perceived drivers of the pandemic;
- § Advocacy should be undertaken at international and regional levels for donors and governments to facilitate long term sustainable programmes aimed at providing indigenous solutions to HIV/AIDS problems in Africa;
- § WOFA should facilitate a dialogue between CSOs and the African Union (AU) for the investment in a central Anti-retroviral (ARV) industry in Africa, in order to ensure sustainable production and free access to ARV;
- § The Conference recommended that WOFA assists CSOs to engage their respective governments to scale-up Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) services as preventive and supportive interventions to HIV/AIDS;
- § All countries should translate National Policies on HIV/AIDS into laws to make them binding and effective;
- § The Conference also recommend that, care and support services be scaled-up to reach community levels and that social grants be integrated in such services;
- § Funding for HIV/AIDS should go directly to implementing organizations whose capacities would be developed to manage the funds properly;
- § Finally, Conference urged African governments to implement the Abuja declaration of 2001 to allocate 15% of national budget to Health;

In expressing gratitude to the Woyome Foundation for Africa and the Ghanaian Ministry of Health, the CSOs, Media, PLWHAs, Researchers, National AIDS Commission officials and all other stakeholders who participated in the three-day conference, committed themselves to engage governments and WOFA to make these recommendations a reality.

Stella AFRIYIE-ANKRAH  
*Conference Coordinator*

Eunice PEREGRINO- DARTEY  
*Conference Facilitator*

**Background:**

*WOFA is a charity foundation registered in Ghana and is focused on providing care and support for People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA), and protection and support for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs). Under its Africa Life Aid Project, the Woyome Foundation for Africa has initiated a number of activities and campaigns to draw attention to the problem; raise funds globally for the care of PLWHAs & OVCs (Orphaned & Vulnerable Children) and behavioural change to end stigmatization. For further information about the Foundation, visit [www.wofound.org](http://www.wofound.org) or [www.africalifeaid.org](http://www.africalifeaid.org).*