



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Contacts:** Ms. Olwethu Mlanzeli [omlanzeli@pedaids.org](mailto:omlanzeli@pedaids.org)

### **An Africa-led initiative launched at the African Union 2023 Heads of States Summit to tackle AIDS in children and young people in Africa**

**Date: 23 February 2022**

On February 19, 2023, Africa Reaching the End of AIDS in Children and Youth in Africa by 2025 (Africa REACH) was launched in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia at the Organisation of First Ladies for Development's (OAFLAD) 27<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, which was convened along the margins of the African Union Heads of States Summit.

An African-led, African-focused effort that envisions an Africa with children and youth free from AIDS, Africa REACH seeks to renew commitment, influence African political and cultural structures, and generational leadership, to accelerate continental momentum, and catalyse a new action to end AIDS among children and youth in Africa.

"We need homegrown action and care, as new HIV infections among young people remain high and children are left behind in the HIV response", H.E. Toyin Saraki, the CEO of Wellbeing Foundation and a World Health Organisation Africa region panelist said at her opening remarks on behalf of Africa Reach Leadership Council.

"We cannot end AIDS in Africa, nor achieve the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals for our countries without investing in children and adolescents".

While we have made progress in HIV response among adults, we have left children and young people behind, with HIV testing, treatment and viral suppression appallingly low compared to adults. A strong sense of complacency about the AIDS pandemic is threatening to take hold of Africa especially in regards to children and the youth. With about 90% of all children living with HIV worldwide, residing in Africa, ending AIDS in children and youth in Africa is about the future of the continent and not just about global "epidemic control."

"Politics and politicians are there to solve our most complex problems but they cannot solve them on their own", H.E. Monica Geingos, the First Lady of Namibia and Africa Reach Chair of the Leadership Council said in a post launch interview with SABC News.



“...the political will is there but that will, needs to be translated into action to reduce new HIV infections, particularly in children and young people and save people’s lives. It is about our collective legacies and this can be done”

The Africa REACH Leadership Council is comprised of highly influential individuals, business leaders, political leaders, cultural powerbrokers that can amplify the paediatric and youth HIV agenda beyond conventional political venues.

Among attendees were Africa REACH founding partners, the CEO of the Desmond Tutu Health Foundation, Professor Linda-Gail Bekker and the Executive Director of the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, Mr. Chip Lyons who conveyed their support for the initiative and committed to providing technical insight and assistance needed to ensure its success in reaching an AIDS-free Africa.

Other Africa REACH partners include ViiV Healthcare and Johnson and Johnson. Africa REACH Leadership Council Members include:

- Chair- First Lady of Namibia, H.E. Mrs. Monica Geingos
- Co-Chair- Reverend Godson Kpavuvu from the African Council of Churches
- South African Broadcaster- Dr. Criselda Kananda
- Tanzanian Member of Parliament-Hon. Judith Kapinga
- Zambian Member of Parliament and Chief Whip- Hon. Princess Kasune
- Kenyan Journalist (Nation Media)- Mr. Leon Lidigu
- Zimbabwe Chief coordinator for the National Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic in the Office of the President and Cabinet- Dr Agnes Mahomva
- Namibian Member of Parliament- Hon. Patience Masua
- Youth Envoy at the African Union Commission- Ms. Chido Mpemba
- Namibia’s Deputy Minister of Information, Communication and Technology- Hon. Emma Theofelus
- Wellbeing Foundation CEO and World Health Organisation- Africa Region (WHO AFRO) Advisory Panelist - H.E. Mrs. Toyin Saraki
- Prevention Access Campaign (PAC) Global Communications Manager- Mr. Tianshe Rufurwadzo
- Emir of Shonga (Kwara State, Nigeria) and Former Chairman of the National Primary Health Care Development Agency in Nigeria- H.R.H. Dr. Haliru Yahaya

..... ENDS .....

For more information on Africa REACH, visit [www.africareach.org](http://www.africareach.org)