

## PARTNERING TO MAKE BUDGETS WORK FOR THE PEOPLE

# Treatment Advocacy and Literacy Campaign (TALC) - Zambia

The Treatment Advocacy and Literacy Campaign (TALC) was formed in 2005 to lobby for equitable, affordable, and sustainable access to treatment, care, and support for people living with HIV and AIDS in Zambia. Based in Lusaka, but with over 100 affiliates throughout the country, TALC is a movement that works with nongovernmental, faith, and community-based organizations in seven of Zambia's nine provinces.

With a special emphasis on poorly managed rural clinics and the inconsistent availability of antiretroviral drugs, TALC has been able to focus national attention on the plight of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). On the ground level, TALC mobilizes its network to monitor the delivery of healthcare services and to keep the public informed on new developments in the fight against HIV/AIDS. As a well respected and highly motivated grassroots advocacy organization, TALC is a regional leader in raising awareness about the epidemic in Africa. It hopes to translate its successes in healthcare access initiatives into a broader platform of social development in Zambia.

### TALC's Makes HIV/AIDS an Election Issue

TALC's particular focus on HIV/AIDS has been a critical component in the struggle to improve the quality of life for Zambians. The disease has wreaked havoc on communities all over the country, and the government has declared it a national epidemic. While such diseases normally affect those at the margins of society, HIV/AIDS in Zambia transcends typical socioeconomic boundaries. Nearly 1 in 5 Zambians are living with HIV/AIDS, as the country struggles with the seventh highest prevalence rate in the world. The government of Zambia has been more proactive in supporting PLWHA than others in the region, but it has unfortunately fallen short in its commitment to contain the epidemic. TALC has helped strengthen government capacity for more responsive healthcare allocations by holding politicians accountable for misplaced priorities and using the media to unite a diverse coalition in support of increased funding for medicines and treatment.

During the 2006 election cycle, TALC challenged politicians to bring HIV/AIDS to the forefront of the national debate. TALC Director Felix Mwanza told the IRIN News Agency, "All election candidates should... tell us what they will do about the pandemic if we elect them to office, because they should recognize that HIV is as much an election issue as a better economy or improved education." TALC distributed questionnaires among the candidates for the office of president, seats in parliament, and local government positions, asking each to answer a set of questions about their commitment to supporting PLWHA. "It will not be a case of



**Zambia**  
**Open Budget Index 2010**  
Overall Score: 36  
Government provides minimal information to the public on how it manages public resources

Availability of budget documents critical for effective public input:	
Pre-Budget Statement	Yes
Executive's Budget Proposal	Yes
Citizens Budget	No
Enacted Budget	Yes
In-Year Reports	No
Mid-Year Review	Yes
Year-End Report	Yes
Audit Report	Yes
<a href="http://www.openbudgetindex.org">www.openbudgetindex.org</a>	

waiting until after the election – we are able to tell someone's commitment easily from their answers in these questionnaires," said Mwanza. "HIV is a national issue and every voter... has been affected by it in some way." By making HIV/AIDS a political issue, TALC is ensuring that the problem receives the attention it deserves.

TALC has kept the pressure on policymakers in recent years by mobilizing many different constituencies in support of PLWHA. To commemorate World AIDS Day in 2010, TALC organized a rally in the Eastern provincial capital of Chipata. The march for "Universal Access and Human Rights" caught the attention of the local media, which began to publish some disturbing discoveries made by TALC. The previous year had been difficult for PLWHA, as the global economic crisis threatened public investment in the health sector and decreased the availability of some essential antiretroviral drugs (ARVs). The

Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria also had frozen payments to the Zambian Ministry of Health after audits revealed US\$8 million were missing. In the private market, ARVs cost as much as US\$70 a month, making the drugs far too expensive for most Zambians to afford without government assistance.

The Zambia Post published an article about how some residents of Lusaka had developed resistance to a second stage of ARVs. The newspaper reported that "transmitted drug resistance in eleven countries increased by 38 percent for each year that a country had been scaling up ARV treatment." TALC estimated that approximately 160 people in Zambia were in need of expensive third stage ARVs to continue their treatment. In response to the shortage of third line ARVs, TALC petitioned the Zambian Minister of Health, Kapembwa Simbao, to distribute medicine to those who had developed resistance

to other medications. TALC dubbed the petition "Life for Two Weeks Not Enough," reflecting how dire the situation had become for those whose conditions were quickly deteriorating.

The government initially resisted the demands of the campaign, but after months of lobbying, it finally agreed to provide third stage ARVs to PLWHA. This benefit, while expensive, will save the lives of hundreds of people who have developed resistance to more common forms of medication. TALC considers this battle a small but significant victory in the war against HIV/AIDS in Zambia. The government has been increasingly responsive and transparent in its efforts to control the epidemic, but there is still a lot of progress to be made. TALC will continue to monitor the Ministry of Health and the supply chain for ARVs in its efforts to expand access to lifesaving HIV/AIDS treatments and increase the quality of life for all Zambians.

## TALC's Participation in the Partnership Initiative

The primary issue TALC hopes to address is ineffective access to antiretroviral therapy in Zambia's rural areas. Little research has been done to identify the root causes of this problem, as almost all resources are channeled into remedying the symptoms of the problem instead of investing in moving toward more permanent and sustainable solutions. TALC plans to study the extent to which insufficiently skilled health personnel in rural areas burden the system's capacity to manage the HIV/AIDS problem. With the support of the International Budget Partnership, other Partnership Initiative organizations in Zambia, and the Centre for Economic Governance and AIDS in Africa (CEGAA), TALC will analyze the distribution of government resources for healthcare and look for ways the Zambian government can eliminate inefficiencies in the delivery of healthcare services. TALC hopes that by increasing awareness and bolstering citizen demands for better access, implementing agencies will be more careful, transparent, and accountable in the way public resources are used, leading to more appropriate allocations and improved public services.

---

### TALC - Zambia

Plot 21 Mwalule Road  
Northmead, Lusaka, Zambia  
talc@iconnect.zm  
www.talczambia.org

### International Budget Partnership

Cape Town • Mexico City • Mumbai • Washington, D.C.  
info@internationalbudget.org  
www.internationalbudget.org

---

*The IBP's Partnership Initiative is a collaborative effort that seeks to enhance the impact of civil society budget work in selected countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The initiative strives to contribute to the development of sustainable institutions; to increase public access to timely, reliable, and useful information; to enhance the effective participation of civil society in policy and budget processes; and to establish a platform of good practices on which future generations of civil society can build.*