

Education Responding to HIV and AIDS

Annual MJK AIDS Event

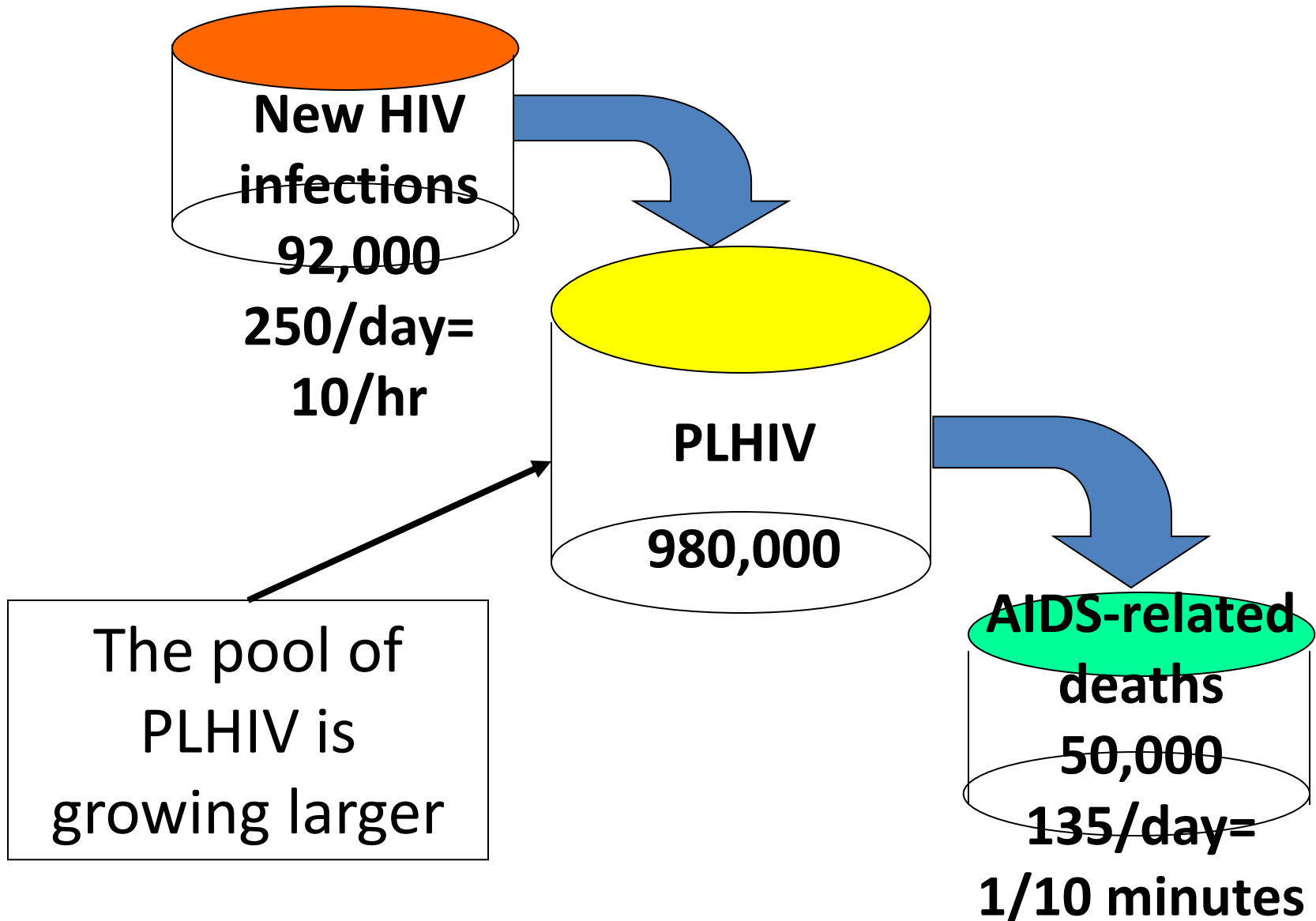
Limerick University

28th November 2012

The Importance of this World AIDS Day Event

- “Our lives begin to end the day we stop talking about things that are important” (Martin Luther King)
- This annual gathering to reflect on some aspects of the HIV and AIDS epidemic inspires millions of people worldwide to think and talk about what has been the most catastrophic global occurrence in the past 30 years, an epidemic that has taken the lives of more than 25,000,000 people, has shattered the lives of six or eight times that number, has left 16,000,000 children without their parents, caused 1.7 million deaths last year and infects more than 34 million people, a number that continues to increase with as many as 2.5 million new infections in 2011 (almost 5 ever minute)

HIV and AIDS in Zambia, 2009



The Need for Hope

- Tsepo Sitali (8 years old)
- As you talk about the problems of HIV/AIDS, think about us, the children. ...We are trying to reach you, trying to tell you something, to draw your attention to how we feel...We have our dreams... We ask you to help us realise these dreams. The name Tsepo in my language means hope. When we do meet again....I hope you will bring good news that there is hope, hope for us little children of Africa

Hope has increased for Tsepo and all like her

- Vast, global mobilisation against HIV and AIDS
- Nothing remotely like this in previous human experience
- Concern, money, science, the whole United Nations apparatus, countries, communities, civil society – all throwing generous and excellent efforts into responding to the epidemic. Irish AID's outstanding contribution
- HIV no longer a death sentence
- Effective, less costly drugs available
- New scientific advances and progress on road to a vaccine and even a cure
- Fewer deaths, fewer new infections, people living with HIV are just that – they are living and living now with hope
- Words from Open Heart House book: Jimmy (5); Charlie (9); J (11)

Education Generates Hope

- Long before life saving medications came on the scene, we knew that we had another resource for generating hope, we had education
- Education can be a powerful force—perhaps the most powerful force of all—in combating the spread of HIV/AIDS (WEF, Dakar 2000)
- We now have an historic opportunity to end one of the greatest threats to humanity occurring in our lifetime. **Ending AIDS is possible -- and education is the key to success. (Sidibe)**
- **Education is the social equivalent of a vaccine and it works powerfully against HIV and AIDS**

Sidibe's Words

- One of the clearest lessons of the past three decades is that **illiteracy, poverty, the subjugation of women and discriminatory attitudes fuel the spread of HIV but that fighting these evils education can slow it.** Education -- not just sex education but literacy, numeracy, critical-thinking, global citizenship and learning to accept others as they are -- is the social equivalent of a vaccine that's already available to us

Education protects against HIV

- One of the most powerful responses that can be made to HIV and AIDS is to get children into school, keep them in school for as many years as possible, and while they are at school ensure that they develop worthwhile knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and values
- What counts is education as education - not so much what they learn but that they have been in school and that they have learned
- Education works even better in preventing HIV if it deals with HIV, sexuality, reproductive health and life-skills issues
- ABC – abstain not just from sex but from all activities that bring harm to society (discrimination against women, corruption, environmental degradation, stigmatising attitudes and behaviour, male chauvinism, etc)

The Benefits of being Educated

- Those who are better educated know more about the disease and how to protect themselves
- Those who are better educated know more about the importance and practice of going for an HIV test and learning their results
- Those who are better educated know more about the importance of maintaining a good nutritious diet
- Those who are better educated are able to internalise and adopt messages coming from other sources
- Since the mid-1990s those who are better educated are less likely to become HIV infected
- Those who are better educated show more understanding and accepting attitudes to those who differ from them and hence to those who carry HIV infection

More and Better Education for Girls

- Increasing and improving educational opportunities for girls may be the most important single contribution that educational systems can make to overcoming HIV and AIDS
- Reduces girls' vulnerability to HIV by bolstering their self-esteem, assertiveness and economic prospects

If Given a Chance, Education Could Do More

- More and better education, and especially for girls
- Nurture the unique gifts that every child brings to the world
- Invest more
- Make school a place where children want to be
- Put quality, relevance and transformative education at the heart of the global social, political and development agendas
- This way we will respond to a basic human right of every child and individual
- At the same time we will break the back of the HIV and AIDS epidemic
- **Ending AIDS is possible -- and education is the key to success. (Sidibe)**

A Caution

- We will never be able to take full advantage of the progress that has been made in HIV and AIDS science until we develop and sustain the human, organizational, and structural capacities necessary to implement these new scientific breakthroughs
- If we fail to attend to the “on-the-ground” details of implementation, we risk dissipating the promise of new drugs, novel therapies, and enhanced interventions that could, in fact, lead us to an AIDS-free generation
- Education is integral to these on-the-ground details
- Now more than ever, education is essential for responding to the epidemic