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PRESS RELEASE

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MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND PARTNERS IN ZAMBIA LAUNCH THE NATIONAL MALE CIRCUMCISION STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2010-2020

LUSAKA - The Ministry of Health and partners today launched the National programme on male circumcision and the National Male Circumcision Strategy and Implementation Plan 2010 - 2020 at a ceremony which was officiated by the Deputy Minister of Health Hon. Mwendoi Akakandelwa. The national strategy and implementation plan on male circumcision is intended to make available and accessible on a voluntary basis high quality safe male circumcision services to all uninfected men and boys aged between 13-39 years in order to achieve the targeted national male circumcision prevalence of 50% by 2020. HIV prevalence in Zambia is 14.3% and only an estimated 17% of men are circumcised. The national strategy is specifically aimed at increasing the number of health facilities providing safe male circumcision services through a well defined package, increasing the skills and quality of service providers and increasing informed demand for the service through health promotion interventions.

The national programme on male circumcision has been launched in line with the recommendation made in March 2007 by the World Health Organization and the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS that male circumcision should be promoted as an HIV prevention strategy in addition to existing prevention strategies such as partner reduction and correct and consistent condom use especially in high HIV prevalence countries like Zambia. This is based on recent evidence from randomized controlled trials in Kenya, South Africa and Uganda that have shown the value of male circumcision in reducing HIV infection by approximately 60%. The Ministry of Health received technical and financial support from the World Health Organization Country Office to conduct a high level advocacy meeting to develop the national strategy on male circumcision.

In his launch statement, the Deputy Minister of Health Hon. Mwendoi Akakandelwa re-affirmed the government's commitment to the integration of male circumcision as part of comprehensive HIV prevention programme in order to contribute to reversing and stopping the spread of HIV. He said that the government had set up a male circumcision technical working group, formulated an interim roadmap of activities and was in the process of engaging a national programme coordinator and developing detailed and costed activity implementation plans. He stated that the Ministry of Health would lay emphasis on provision of safe, high quality and easily accessible services and ensure the use of standard

guidelines. He emphasised the need to provide correct information to communities particularly that male circumcision is effective only when used in combination with other prevention methods like condoms, avoiding multiple sexual partners and other methods.

Speaking at the same function, the WHO Representative, Dr. Olusegun Babaniyi stated that male circumcision provides up to 60% protection against HIV infection when combined with other prevention methods. He said that Zambia needed to circumcise close to two and half million men over a ten year period if the programme was to have a significant impact. He assured the government of WHO's continued support to the programme and called for the use of WHO/UNAIDS tools for programming purposes, the development of stronger partnerships, training of practitioners, accreditation of service providers and involvement of communities.

The provision of male circumcision services has been piloted in Zambia since 2004 by the University Teaching Hospital and Non Governmental Organizations including the JHPIEGO and Society for Family Health at various sites within and outside health care settings and results showed high levels of acceptability by the communities. There are more than 10 sites countrywide that have trained staff and are offering comprehensive male circumcision services including counselling and testing. The national plan seeks to establish close to 300 sites countrywide and promote demand for the service. To date more than 2,500 health workers have been trained in male circumcision.

The partners working in collaboration with the Ministry of Health at country level include the National AIDS Council, World Health Organization, UNFPA, UNAIDS and UNICEF, JHPIEGO, Health Communication Partnership (HCP), Health Systems Support Programme (HSSP), Society for Family Health, Family Health Trust, Marie Stopes International, Centres for Infectious Diseases Research in Zambia (CIDRZ), Comprehensive HIV/AIDS Management Programme (CHAMP) and the Zambia Centre for Communication Programmes.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE NATIONAL MALE
CIRCUMCISION STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2010-2020 IN
ZAMBIA

30th July 2009 at INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL



Minister of Health, Hon. Kapembwa Simbao officially launched the male circumcision programme in Zambia.



WHO Representative Dr. Olusegun Babaniyi giving his statement at the launch.



Various partners were in attendance at the launch



Exhibition of materials on male circumcision by partners