



REGIONAL INTER-AGENCY TASK TEAM ON CHILDREN AND AIDS
IN EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA



Vol 10 Issue 7

RIATT-ESA NEWSLETTER

The first quarter of the year is almost gone, yet it feels like the year just started. In 2024 RIATT-ESA newsletters will be highlighting emerging issues in the region, sharing partners' resources or promising practices, and creating spaces for children and youth voices to be heard. Currently, RIATT-ESA programming represents two distinct groups which are children and adolescents. This year's series of newsletters aim to feature promising interventions and programmes that address the specific needs of these key demographics throughout their cycle. Coming out in April, the next issue will be focusing on programmes on pediatric AIDS, TB, adolescents, adherence and access to services. Partners are invited to submit their programme, related resources or research to be featured on the next newsletter through any of RIATT-ESA communication channels.

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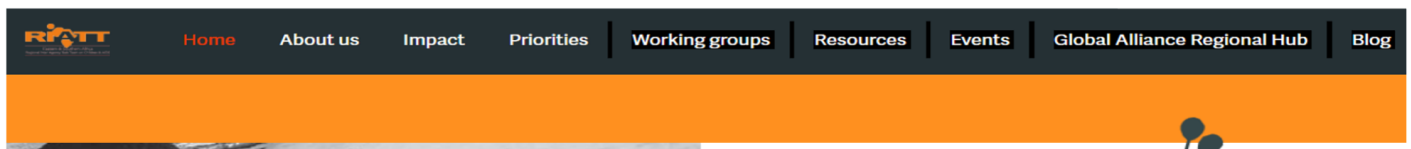
RIATT-ESA Launches Global Alliance Regional Hub website.

RIATT-ESA, a regional secretariat for the network of organizations in the East and Southern Africa (ESA) in collaboration with UNICEF East and Southern African Region Office (ESARO) is providing support services to the Regional Hub of the Global Alliance in the ESA region. Its responsibilities mainly border on handling secretarial tasks, overseeing partner relationships, and knowledge management. This agreement cements the smooth and effective operation of the Hub and coordinates priority governments' efforts to end AIDS in children and adolescents by 2030.

Against this backdrop, RIATT-ESA developed a website designed for this cause. The website was officially launched in January 2024 with users now able to navigate through the website to access information and Regional Hub updates.

To access the Regional Hub website, users will first visit RIATT-ESA website at www.riatt-esa.org as shown in the picture 1 below;

The link will take you to the Regional Hub website beautifully designed to wear an African face as seen in the picture 2.



Picture 1: RIATT-ESA website Menu Bar



Picture 2: Regional Hub home page

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Save the Children South Africa commemorates National Children's day—Mjejane, Mkomazi

On 20-21 November 2023, Save the Children (SC), GBV fund, National Department of Social Development (NDS), South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), and local Civil society organizations collaborated on a campaign to raise community awareness on issues of child marriages, 'child pregnancies and gender-based violence against women and children in the community of Mjejane, Nkomazi in Mpumalanga. The campaign came because of an alarming report from NDS about a rising number of child pregnancies and child marriages in the community of Mjejane. The affected children are reported to be of ages between 10-17 years.

Stakeholders and government departments including youth organizations engaged on door-to-door activities to raise awareness on above issues prior to the march that took place on 21 November 2023 in Mjejane. SC and partners provided branded IEC material during the awareness campaign to sensitize the public about high prevalence of underage pregnancies, school dropouts and increased transition of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) among young people. Parents from the local community attended the march in numbers on 21 November 2023. At least 350 local community members participated in the march.

The department of Social Development expressed its gratitude for the contribution that SC and other local organizations made towards a successful awareness campaign on issues of national importance. SC will continue to play an active role in future to mobilize partners and coordinate the commemoration of National Children's Day to raise awareness on issues that affect the wellbeing of children and promote the human rights culture, particularly the rights of children.



Source: Save the Children South Africa

RIATT-ESA endorses International Workshop on HIV, SRHR and Adolescence 2024

The conference will take place in Nairobi Kenya from 2-4 October 2024. Click [here](#) to register and follow all updates.



RIATT-ESA to host Regional Learning and Linking Forum.

RIATT-ESA will convene a Regional bi-annual conference. As a bi-annual gathering, this forum provides a unique opportunity for regional partners to come together. It allows for discussions on the impact they have made, the gaps that persist, promises of change, and the formation of a network of experts.

Date: June 25-6, 2024

Venue: Johannesburg South Africa

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Young people with sexual or gender diversity are at higher risk of stopping their treatment because of stigma and harsh laws—HEARD

Ending the AIDS pandemic – particularly in eastern and southern Africa – cannot be achieved unless more resources are channeled to meet the needs of key vulnerable populations.

This is one of the themes that emerged during an AIDS conference in June in South Africa. Prejudice against particular groups – such as men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender communities – interferes with treatment regimes and people’s adherence to treatment. These groups are also at higher risk of HIV due to increased levels of stigma, discrimination, violence, and criminalization.

This is according to a research study conducted by the Health Economics and HIV and AIDS Research Division (HEARD) of the University of KwaZulu Natal on [HIV-related stigma linked to young people with sexual or gender diversity](#). The study which was conducted in three countries of Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Zambia discovered that;

a) Criminal laws and strongly negative socio-cultural and religious beliefs produced deeply rooted intolerance

around sexual or gender diversity.

b) Participants spoke about repeated experiences of verbal harassment, gossiping about, and physical violence.

c) Other population groups with HIV said their lives had become more tolerable as social awareness and acceptance of HIV had increased over time. However, HIV-related stigma regained its potency when linked to sexual or gender diversity, with adverse effects on adherence to antiretroviral treatment.

Key populations face inequalities in access to HIV services, justice, and human rights and investments in programs towards them. The study, therefore, recommends that there is a need for more community-based organizations run by these key populations that would assist in advocating for mitigation measures to eliminate stigma and discrimination against these key populations.

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