

Regional News Roundup

AFRICA

HIV infection slowing but prevention gap persists The rate of new HIV infections worldwide had declined by 17 percent in the past eight years and prevention efforts can take some of the credit, according to the annual UNAIDS update on the epidemic released on 24 November. While the epidemic appeared to have stabilised in most parts of the world, the number of people living with HIV continued to grow, reaching 33.4 million by December 2008. This was partly the result of better access to life-prolonging antiretroviral

(ARV) treatment but an estimated 2.7 million new HIV infections were added.

Read more: <http://www.plusnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=87179>

ETHIOPIA

Government rejects politicised food aid claims The Ethiopian government has vehemently rejected accusations that it has excluded some opposition supporters from a food-for-work programme, charges that are the focus of growing international concern in the run-up to elections in 2010. "The programme targets the communities and government doesn't get involved in the selection process," a government minister said. One of the government's chief accusers is Medrek Gebru Asrat, spokesman for the Forum for Democratic Dialogue in Ethiopia, a coalition of eight parties that analysts say is well placed to challenge the ruling party.

Read more: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=87175>

KENYA

Hundreds flee attack in east Kenyan town Hundreds of people have fled their homes in Isiolo, eastern Kenya, following an attack by armed men that left 11 people dead in Kisima locality, the Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCD) said. More than 100 Turkana families have left their homes since mid November, a KRCD coordinator said. Affected communities include the Turkana, who are said to have been behind the attack, the Somali, Borana and Samburu communities.

Read more: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=87082>

SOMALIA

Mass exodus as militia takes control of southern town Somalia's Islamist Al-Shabaab militia group has taken control of the southern town of Afmadow, 620km south of the capital Mogadishu, causing hundreds of families to flee in fear of violence. Al-Shabaab now controls most of southern Somalia.

Aid agencies have also reportedly left town. Read more:

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=87169>

SUDAN

Southerners still besieged by suspected LRA fighters Suspected Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) fighters

have attacked Nzara region of Southern Sudan at least three times this month, forcing civilians to flee their homes, local officials said. The attacks left at least seven people dead and eight abducted, indicating that the LRA were still active, despite ongoing military operations against them. More than 220 people have been killed and at least 157 abducted by the LRA this year in Southern Sudan, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Some in Southern Sudan claim the

LRA continues to be used as a proxy force by former civil war enemies in the north to destabilise the south before the April 2010 elections. Read more:

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=87173>

Polls put off by a week Voter registration and the election date in Sudan have been extended slightly to accommodate delays incurred in the process in some areas of the vast country, the National Elections Commission said. Voter registration will now end on 7 December instead of 30 November, and elections will be held on 11 April instead of 5 April 2010. The decision came amid growing concerns that voter registration has been bogged down by various challenges. Read more:

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=87157>

UGANDA

AIDS Commission takes new direction in prevention.

The Ugandan AIDS Commission (UAC) is revamping its national HIV information campaign after HIV

prevention messages were less successful than hoped. Basic facts shall be used in the messages to communicate effectively because the level of knowledge is limited, said a senior health educationist with the UAC. Campaigns aimed at ending cross-generational sex will be abandoned in favour of generic warnings about engaging in risky sex. Several senior officials have called for the return of fear-driven campaigns, which they say were instrumental in Uganda's initial success in lowering prevalence. However, detractors to this method say the key to success in prevention is education, not fear. Read more: <http://www.plusnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=87053>