

# Seminar on the Level of Knowledge of Issues Related to HIV/AIDS in the Justice Sector in Mozambique

**Maputo, 6 June 2008** – A seminar aimed at presenting the results a research on the level of knowledge regarding HIV/AIDS in the Justice sector, was held on 6th June, in the Mozambican capital. The event was hosted by the Justice Minister, and in the presidium were also the UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, a Representative of the National Prisons Director, the National AIDS Council Executive Director, the World Health Organization Representative, and the Representative of UNFPA.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is supporting the Administration of the Penal Justice in Mozambique through the Ministry of Justice. One of the main components of its project is the support to prisons, where a number of actions have already been developed in order to provide an updated knowledge on the situation in the prisons sector in Mozambique. The overall reform of the Prison system in Mozambique has been supported by UNDP, starting with the assessment of the prisons in Mozambique (2000), the support to the drafting of the “Prison Policy”, approved by the Council of Ministers in 2002, and the actual process of unification of the prison system, started in 2005.

UNDP expects that the research results and the seminar will impact on raising public awareness on HIV/AIDS and see the clear linkages between the HIV/AIDS in prisons and its impact into the normal society. Furthermore, the overall project “Supporting Citizen’s Access to Justice”, will thus contribute for the development of an action plan on HIV and AIDs in prisons.

Mozambique is among 10 countries most affected with HIV/AIDS, with about 1.1 million people living with the disease, which may contribute for the life expectancy to lower from the current 50.2 to 36.5 years by 2010. In this research, it was noted that there are misconceptions on the ways the disease is transmitted.

Regarding the seminar, Mr. Ndolamb Ngokwey, UN Resident Representative, regretted the fact that there is mistrust on the protective efficacy of condoms and appealed to participants to include this data when drafting curricular programs and in the training activities, namely, the importance and promotion of the use of condoms in the prevention of Sexually Transmitted Infections and particularly HIV/AIDS.

In view of the existence of factors that increase the risk of propagation of HIV in prisons, it is urgent to establish HIV/AIDS programs so that the penitentiary units are not transformed into HIV/AIDS propagation centers, said Mr. Ngokwey. This Representative further revealed that the HIV/AIDS component of the Project "Supporting Citizen's Access to Justice" searches to attain the two objectives, namely, to support the Law published in October 2001 that prohibits discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS at workplace, through campaigns of public clarification against discrimination, as well as developing projects of sensitization, education, counseling and treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS in prisons.

"Supporting Citizen's Access Justice", is a Joint UNDP and European Commission funded project, and is carried out by the Ministry of Justice, which coordinates the contributions of the Supreme Court, Attorney General's Office, and the Ministry of Interior (for Criminal Investigation).