

# Civil society wants an inclusive law on HIV/Aids

NATIONAL and foreign civil society organizations are demanding the establishment of a law on HIV/AIDS that takes women into account and also want the centralization of the resources meant for the fight against this pandemic.

Representatives of these organizations, that include Monaso, Link, the Mozambique Red Cross, AWEP, Doctors Without Borders (MSF), the Human Rights League, ONUSIDA, among others, were speaking on Tuesday during a meeting with the Parliamentary Nucleus on HIV/

AIDS, that was created by this organ's Standing Commission.

The meeting was to bring the civil society closer to the parliament in order for the society to be able to assess the parliament's work in matters related to this pandemic.

Addressing the audience, Isau Menezes, the spokesperson of the Parliamentary Nucleus, said that this organism is asking the civil society to contribute with ideas on how the Assembly of the Republic can better perform its different tasks.

On matters related to HIV/AIDS,

the representatives of the civil society criticised the existing law saying that it only benefits the employed group of people, who represent less than 10 per cent of the Mozambican population.

To illustrate their point they mentioned the strong lines of the law, which are against discrimination at the work place and defends that no worker should be forced to undergo HIV tests for effects of employment. They note that this leaves out about 90 per cent of the Mozambican people, who do not have a formal

employment.

Fernanda Teixeira, the secretary general of the Mozambique Red Cross, drew the parliament's attention to the fact that the law should protect women, and include aspects such as inheritance and their right as guardian of their children when they become widows.

She also defended that it is imperative to take into account the HIV/AIDS issue in the Absolute Poverty Reduction Action Plan (PARPA II), in the government's Social and Economic Plan, and in the State Budget.

For his part, Garpar Stefane, of Monaso, said that his organization has been promoting a national campaign to improve the observance of the human rights of HIV infected people by pressing for a law that includes all social strata, and a closer cooperation between the parliament and the communities.

Speaking of the Anti-retroviral treatment, a representative of the Health Ministry said that his institution has started installing Day Hospitals in various health units across the country, to cater for AIDS patients,

particularly along the development corridors, where there has been a great movement of people from different countries.

"Our attention is turned on the corridors in the northern and central regions, specifically in Tete, Nacala, and Beira, and on the most populated provinces, namely Zambezia, in the central region, and Nampula, in the north", said the source.

The source added that "There were only 17 Day Hospitals in 2004, but we will have 24 by the end of this year and, according to the National

Strategic Plan for the Fight Against HIV/AIDS, there will be 129 by 2009".

The health authorities estimate that about 20,000 people will be benefitting of treatment with anti-retroviral drugs by the end of the year, funds for which are available, for the period 2005-06, but more funds must be raised for the years to come.

The health authorities lament that most programmes against this pandemic are for a short period, three or six months, after which they stop, which is seen as causing a setback in the programme at large. (Agencies)