

Info4Africa connects communities on World Aids Day

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As South Africa joins the rest of the global community in marking World AIDS Day this weekend, The Centre for HIV/AIDS Networking (HIVAN), one of the country's leading providers of information in the field of HIV, AIDS and TB, has announced that it is changing its name to info4africa.



The Info4Africa Team at the launch of their new brand and strategy

The rebranding reflects the University of KwaZulu-Natal-based centre's dramatically expanded role in recent years, from its origins in compiling and distributing the most comprehensive database of HIV/AIDS support service providers, to one that now also offers access to a much wider spectrum of services using a range of tools and techniques, including cutting-edge cellular technology.

Centre Director Debbie Heustice explained that the reasoning behind the name change also reflected positive changes in the health landscape of South Africa over the past decade.

"HIVAN's focus has expanded and matured such that our database, wider networking and capacity building activities now more broadly reflect service provision in health, wellbeing and development in South Africa," Heustice said.

The centre has built a country-wide database of more than 12 000 support service providers and each year distributes upwards of 20 000 directories, capacitating service providers in all sectors. It also offers face-to-face networking activities including forums, workshops and training.

In partnership with its mobile technology partner, Always Active Technologies (AAT), it also offers all of its information to the public via cell phones using USSD (Unstructured Supplementary Service Data). This technology, the same that's used to check your remaining airtime, is ideal for this purpose as it works on any handset, not just expensive smartphones which are still relatively rare in South Africa.

Those with smartphones - and their numbers are growing daily - can get the information they need from the centre's Mobi site, info4africa.storefind.mobi, while anyone with access to an Internet connected computer can visit the full website, info4africa.org.za.

"With this broadening of focus we felt it was time to change our name to one that more fully conveys the scope of our products, activities and expertise. Through a consultative process with our partner organisations and our staff we are now very pleased and proud to announce our new name and tag line, 'Collecting data. Connecting communities'.

"This new brand speaks to our history and gives us a broader stage on which to engage with all stakeholders in the years to come," Heustice said.

How to use Info4Africa

Info4Africa's database is available through your mobile phone in the following ways:

1. Call *130*448# (Free call except on Vodacom. Vodacom users call *120*448# at a charge of 20 cents per 20 seconds)
2. SMS 45080

3. Info4africa.storefind.mobi
4. www.info4africa.org.za

For more information on info4africa call 0860 448 911 or email media@hiv911.org.za.

About Info4Africa

Formerly known HIVAN, info4africa is a self-funded Centre of the School of Applied Human Sciences, College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

This directory series of HIV-related services in South Africa is partially made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the President's Emergency Plan (PEPFAR). The contents are the responsibility of info4africa (through a sub-agreement with the Foundation for Professional Development) and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

The mobile technology is provided by Always Active Technologies (AAT) as part of their social responsibility portfolio.

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