

“Create Your Future Now!”

UNODC speaks with Dr. Connie Osborne, Director General of Zambia’s National HIV/AIDS/STI/TB Council

In recognition of International Women’s Day, the UNODC Regional Office for Southern Africa (ROSAF) spoke with an inspirational figure in women’s leadership, Dr. Connie Osborne. Doctor Osborne serves as the Director General of Zambia’s National HIV/AIDS/STI/TB Council (NAC), an organization that enjoys a strong partnership with UNODC. As part of UNODC HIV/AIDS mandate, the UNODC office in Zambia was established in 2008 to coordinate the prevention, treatment and care of HIV/AIDS in partnership with NAC.



Dr. Osborne being officially introduced as NAC Director-General by Director for National Public Health Institute, Professor Victor Mukonka, 2020



NAC and UNODC jointly plan priority activities based on the UNODC HIV/AIDS mandate and NAC priorities. UNODC provides funding and technical support for NAC, which implements projects at the national, provincial and municipal levels that are funded and planned by UNODC. UNODC also assists NAC with capacity-building by enabling the organization to attend key global conferences and establish new training initiatives. Through these processes, specific practices and tools developed by UNODC are adopted and implemented by NAC in the Zambian context.

Prior to her arrival at NAC, Dr. Osborne enjoyed a long and impressive career, from serving on the frontline in the battle against HIV/AIDS as a paediatrician and resident medical officer at Lusaka Teaching Hospital, to working with the WHO, UNAIDS, UNICEF and AMREF, before joining NAC as Director General on January 6th, 2020. Since then, Dr. Osborne has overseen the successful implementation of new strategies for the organization, applying her international experience to a vitally-important organization in her home country. Throughout her first year on the job, Dr. Osborne established a performance appraisal system for NAC employees, worked with the Zambian government to estimate the size of key populations for HIV/AIDS, and improved donor confidence through establishing a Board of Directors.



Dr. Osborne participating in 'RISE UP' campaign to promote the empowerment of adolescent girls and young women in Zambia, 2020

Dr. Osborne lists women's rights activist Graca Machel, and influential law professor Thuli Madonsela, and her own mother among her personal female role models. As an archetype of female leadership in the public health sector herself, Dr. Osborne was asked what advice she had to share with young women who aspire to become future leaders and women of change. Reflecting on her own career and the future of women in leadership, she stated "If you want to predict what your future will look like as a female leader, you have to start creating it now... As Nelson Mandela says, 'it is impossible until it's done.'"



Virtual Interview with Dr. Osborne, 2021

UNODC. It will be a real game-changer for us!"

In the years ahead, NAC aims to continue successful pursuit of its mandate by directing further focus towards harm reduction services such as needle and syringe programs and opioid substitution therapy throughout Zambia. Speaking to the ongoing relationship between UNODC and NAC, Dr. Osborne closed the interview by stating, "I really look forward to the rest of 2021 and our continued partnership with