



The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief April 2006 Newsletter

A Monthly Update on the U.S. Commitment to Turn the Tide Against Global HIV/AIDS

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HIV-POSITIVE MEN CHALLENGE STIGMA UGANDAN MEN LEARN THAT SONG, LAUGHTER, AND DRAMA CAN HELP PEOPLE OVERCOME STIGMA AND VIOLENCE



“Men were hiding and allowing themselves to suffer in stigma,” explained Ecegeri Bates Charles as he recalls how the group of HIV positive men started in a northern district in Uganda. Today, the Arua District Males Community Against HIV/AIDS (ADMACHA), supported by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR/Emergency Plan), is helping to encourage male involvement in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Even though some support groups for people living with HIV/AIDS existed in 2000 in Uganda, few men participated in these groups or acknowledged that they could be at risk for contracting HIV. In Uganda, HIV/AIDS is primarily spread through heterosexual sexual contact. Unfortunately, women are often blamed for the spread of the virus and subjected to abandonment and even violence as a result.

ADMACHA started as a small group of men who held meetings to encourage more HIV-positive men to disclose their HIV status. Members believed that when neighbors saw a group of men living with HIV together singing songs, joking and laughing, neighbors would realize that the men could live positively with HIV.

Today, members of ADMACHA are helping to encourage other men to become involved in the fight against the virus. Members give dramatic presentations featuring messages about HIV/AIDS at an antenatal clinic on Fridays, reaching out to husbands and male partners of women visiting the clinic. They discuss HIV with the men and with the pregnant women at the hospital, and often visiting the couples at their homes to further discuss the issue.

“If the man is threatening the woman at home or if there is even war at home, we try to intervene as men. It is our job to convince the man to find a more positive way of dealing with the situation,” explains Ecegeri Bates Charles, Chairman of ADMACHA.

Additionally, the members of ADMACHA support one another. One member of ADMACHA, Edward, might have died if it were not for the group. After Edward had not attended meetings for two weeks, the men decided that he would be the recipient of their weekly home visit. They found him with no voice and sick with persistent diarrhea. Edward was ashamed for anyone to find him this way, so he had feared to ask for help. The group intervened to help out their friend. They cleaned him and the compound, and found money for transport to take him to the hospital for treatment.

“Wherever we go, we leave an impact,” explains Ecegeri Bates Charles. Working together with support from the U.S. Government, members of ADMACHA are helping to turn the tide against HIV/AIDS.



Photo by Uganda In-Country USG Team

Members of ADMACHA are helping to encourage other men to acknowledge their important role in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

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TRINIDAD & TOBAGO: SONG AND VERSE CONTEST HELPS SPREAD PREVENTION MESSAGES



This year marked the fourth anniversary of the U.S. Ambassador's song and verse contest in Trinidad and Tobago. The Contest is a collaborative effort among the U.S. Government, including the U.S. Embassy in Trinidad and Tobago and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Ministry of Education of Trinidad and Tobago. In the past, organizations including the National AIDS Coordinating Committee, the National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Council, and the Heroes Foundation (a local NGO) have contributed to the event.

The theme of this year's competition was "Prevent HIV/AIDS: Live Smart, Know Before You Start." The organizing committee invited primary and secondary students to perform a poem, song, rap, dramatic monologue, or short skit incorporating the theme. Preliminary competitions were held in all eight educational districts of Trinidad and Tobago, with prizes presented to the first, second, and third place finishers at each of the eight regional contests. The winners of the regional competitions received trophies and cash prizes. The first place winner from each region went on to compete at the national finals at the Queen's Park Savannah in Port of Spain.

This year, the national finals were held on Valentine's Day. The event opened with speeches by the U.S. Ambassador, Dr. Roy L. Austin, and the Education Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, the Honorable Hazel Manning. Both speakers stressed the importance of preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS in Trinidad and Tobago where, according to the most recent statistics, there were 3,388 AIDS deaths between 1983 and 2005.

"The United States supports the most diverse HIV/AIDS prevention strategies of any international partner," said Ambassador Austin. "In addition to the ABC approach to prevention, we support prevention of mother-to-child transmission, prevention of medical transmission through blood safety and safe medical injections programs, and special programs that focus on intravenous drug users, on HIV-discordant couples, on women, on men, and on alcohol abuse, among other key strategies."

Nikki Crosby, an outstanding local entertainer, brilliantly emceed the competitions, evoking joyous responses from the student spectators. Local superstars of the recording industry of Trinidad and Tobago, such as Maximus Dan, Adesh Samaroo, Destra Garcia, and



Photo by Trinidad and Tobago In-Country USG Team

"Prevent HIV/AIDS: Live Smart, Know Before you Start" was the theme of the song and verse contest. More than 2,000 students attended the national finals.

the reigning Soca Monarch Shurwayne Winchester, performed at the event. The enthusiastic performances inspired many students to dance spiritedly in the aisles. Each of the local entertainers generously donated their time to the worthy cause.

The national finals showcased the talented youth of Trinidad and Tobago. The contestants' educational and entertaining performances were cheered by over 2,000 students from over 20 schools throughout the two islands. All of the finalists gave excellent performances that must have made ranking very difficult for the judges. The winner of this year's event was Tenaj Smith from the Five Rivers Secondary School, who sang a calypso entitled "Fight down AIDS." In addition to cash prizes and trophies for the top three contestants, Smith's school received a new computer system donated by a local business.

Past song and verse contests continue to disseminate information on HIV/AIDS to Trinidad and Tobago's population. Contestants and performances from the first Song and Verse Contest in 2003 with the theme, "Live and Let Live: Reducing the Stigma of HIV/AIDS," have been presented at well-attended, high-profile functions. A video including material from the contests has been shown on local television stations on a number of occasions, including on World AIDS Day, and it has been a part of the Health and Family Life curriculum in several of the nation's schools. Also, a 144-page booklet with the poems and lyrics from past contests can be found in schools throughout the country. The contest has been successful in widely transmitting important messages about HIV/AIDS, including life-saving prevention information.

SOUTH AFRICAN MOTHERS VISIT THE WHITE HOUSE

FIRST LADY ANNOUNCES NEW PEDIATRIC AIDS TREATMENT PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP



Six members of Mothers to Mothers-to-Be recently came to Washington, D.C. to highlight the strong partnership between the United States and South Africa in the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic and show the strength and leadership of women in the fight.

The visit highlighted current achievements in preventing mother-to-child HIV transmission as well as the creation of a new public-private partnership that will give children hope for a future without HIV.

The First Lady of the United States, Laura Bush, first met with members of Mothers to Mothers-to-Be last year when she visited their mentoring program for HIV-positive pregnant women and new mothers in Cape Town. The Mothers to Mothers-to-Be visit was marked with an event at the White House on March 13. At the event, the mothers shared their inspirational stories of their work with the Mothers to Mothers program.

The Mothers to Mothers program was founded to provide peer-to-peer support for HIV positive pregnant women. The program is one of many supported by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR/Emergency Plan), helping families face the awesome challenge of living positively with HIV/AIDS. Through the program, expectant mothers who test HIV-positive are paired with mentor mothers who provide support and guidance about living with HIV and about prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission. The Mothers to Mothers program provides



Photo by Kimberlee Hewitt

Babalwa Mbono, Aunt Manyongo "Kunene" Mosima Tantoh, and Gloria Ncanywa were among the members of the Mothers to Mothers program that visited the White House on March 13. Mrs. Laura Bush met with the representatives from the South African program, which is supported by the Emergency Plan, prior to announcing a new public-private partnership for pediatric HIV/AIDS treatment.

mothers with comfort and hope at a critical time. It is a shining example of the tremendous achievements of

"Today, we further our commitment to helping children with a new pediatric AIDS treatment initiative – a groundbreaking and historic alliance. This alliance between public and private partners will promote better, more effective treatments for children living with HIV/AIDS."

— Mrs. Laura Bush
March 13, 2006

the brave men and women who are working to turn the tide against HIV/AIDS.

At the event, the First Lady announced an unprecedented public-private partnership to promote better and more effective treatment for

children living with HIV/AIDS. The U.S. Government, through the Emergency Plan, will work with multilateral organizations including UNAIDS and UNICEF, and innovator and generic pharmaceutical companies to improve pediatric treatment, helping to overcome the barriers to meeting the needs of children with HIV.

Partners will work to identify scientific obstacles to treatment for children, take practical steps to address key barriers, share best practices on scientific issues surrounding dosing of antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) for pediatric applications, and develop systems for clinical and technical support to facilitate rapid regulatory review, approval, manufacturing and availability of pediatric ARV formulations.