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SOUTH AFRICA

SUCCESS STORY

HIV-Positive Mothers Visit White House

Helping mothers-to-be live with and cope with HIV/AIDS



Photo: White House

Laura Bush meets with South African women from the Mothers to Mothers-To-Be project at the White House.

USAID helps HIV-positive mothers-to-be cope with the illness, receive medications, and deliver healthy babies.

Telling Our Story
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First Lady Laura Bush was so impressed by the remarkable mothers she met in South Africa that she invited them for tea and brunch at the White House. These six women live with HIV in Cape Town, where they participate in a USAID-supported project called “Mothers to Mothers-To-Be.” The mothers accepted the First Lady’s invitation, and spent a week in the United States in March 2006.

“When I was in South Africa, I visited a Mothers-To-Be clinic in a township called Khayelitsha, which means ‘new home.’ South African women who are pregnant and HIV-positive have found a new home of sorts in the Mothers to Mothers-To-Be program at the Khayelitsha Maternity Unit,” Mrs. Bush said at the White House reception for the mothers.

In Khayelitsha, Mrs. Bush met one of the project’s coordinators, Babalwa Mbono. Mbono told Mrs. Bush about how she learned she was HIV positive in 2002. Married and pregnant with her second child, Mbono tested for HIV. She found out she was positive, and began managing her infection with help from USAID. Now, she has a beautiful, healthy baby who is HIV-negative. She uses her experience to help change the lives of HIV-positive mothers-to-be who seek comfort and courage.

“Pregnant women learn how to live well in spite of infection. Once they learn to live with HIV, they can fulfill their dreams of seeing their children grow up healthy and strong. The program helps break the stigma of HIV and AIDS by teaching, training and befriending the expectant mothers who have tested positive,” said Mrs. Bush.

During their visit to the U.S., the mothers met with health and educational professionals visited USAID and other agencies and institutions involved in HIV and AIDS research, education, prevention, treatment, and care.

Since 2004, USAID and the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief have provided \$238.7 million to South Africa for HIV/AIDS programs. The mothers who visited Washington DC — and the mothers and children they are helping — are thankful to the American people for this assistance.