



## STORIES of HOPE

### TRINIDAD and TOBAGO



More than 2,000 students attended the national finals of the PEPFAR-supported 2006 U.S. Ambassador's Song and Verse Competition.

*The theme of the 2006 competition was "Prevent HIV/AIDS: Live Smart, Know Before You Start."*



### Song and Verse Contest Increases HIV/AIDS Awareness

Each year, the U.S. Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago hosts a song and verse contest aimed at disseminating information about HIV/AIDS. The contest is a collaborative effort supported by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (Emergency Plan/PEPFAR) in partnership with the Ministry of Education of Trinidad and Tobago.

The theme of the 2006 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 first place winner from each region went on to compete at the national finals at the Queen's Park Savannah in Port of Spain.

The contestants' performances at the national finals were cheered by over 2,000 students from over 20 schools throughout the two islands. The winner of this year's event was Tenaj Smith, 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 be successful in widely disseminating important messages about HIV/AIDS, including life-saving prevention information. A video including material from the first song and verse contest in 2003 with the theme, "Live and Let Live: Reducing the Stigma of HIV/AIDS," has been shown on local television stations on a number of occasions, including World AIDS Day. It has been incorporated into the health and family life curriculum in several schools. Also, a 144-page booklet with the poems and lyrics from past contests can be found in schools throughout the country.

#### The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief

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