

Listen, Learn, and Live without AIDS: MCC Builds Health Awareness alongside Infrastructure in Cape Verde

Cape Verde is composed of an archipelago of nine inhabited islands that lack an efficient transportation system. This limited transportation infrastructure hinders the development of a common national market, increases the costs of production, and impedes the movement of people and goods between the islands. As part of the \$110 million poverty reduction compact between the U.S Government and the Government of Cape Verde, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) is investing in building roads and bridges to improve transportation in the country that will better link Cape Verdeans to social services, employment opportunities, local markets, ports and airports. MCC also ensures that its infrastructure-funded projects involve human development issues in order to build a sustainable path to improved health and education.



The banner reads "Listen, Learn, and Live without AIDS," reinforcing the core message of prevention that is part of the MCC-funded HIV/AIDS awareness campaign.

Improving transport networks can often have negative impacts, such as an increase in HIV/AIDS rates through both sex with migrant workers in construction crews and through openings to previously inaccessible communities. In an effort to mitigate these impacts, the Millennium Challenge Account-Cape Verde (MCA-Cape Verde), the entity in charge of implementing the MCC compact, managed an extensive HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention campaign to complement the MCC-funded construction of roads, bridges, and a port. Since the commencement of the awareness and prevention campaign in the Santiago Island in 2006, additional campaigns have started along the port, the Santo Antao bridges, and additional roads. As of December 2008, 30 information, education, and communication sessions have been held for construction workers, and over 150 sessions with surrounding

communities, accounting for approximately 3,463 participants. These sessions not only touch on HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention, but also on other sexually transmitted diseases and provide information on counselling services available to support voluntary and anonymous screenings. In addition, MCA-Cape Verde signed a memorandum of understanding with the local committee fighting HIV/AIDS, a project funded by the World Bank, to coordinate in guiding and supporting local institutions hired to implement this campaign.

There is already some evidence that the HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention campaign is beginning to have an impact on those who live in the surrounding communities. “In my opinion, everything indicates that this work is having results. I’m older, but I always listen to what the trainers say. Thanks to these sessions, now I know how you can prevent HIV/AIDS,” says Vitalina, a 56-year old participant asked to evaluate the session. “I attended the sessions with many youngsters who appear to be very engaged and seem to be retaining what they are learning.” Another participant, Olvao, who is a local elementary school teacher, added, “I see changes in the population’s behavior, especially among young people. Many are saying that they have started using condoms, are more vigilant and aware that AIDS exists, and are grasping the importance of prevention.”

MCC and the Government of Cape Verde recognize that improving transportation networks through an integral approach, which includes important issues such as health, contributes to sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction. MCC uses this approach to implement all projects by coordinating with donors and other U.S. government agencies. MCC’s commitment in these areas is proof that even construction projects include activities that promote human development in health and education.

For more information on MCC, please visit www.mcc.gov.