



APRIL 2009 NEWSLETTER

The United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief

A MONTHLY UPDATE ON THE U.S. COMMITMENT
TO TURN THE TIDE AGAINST GLOBAL HIV/AIDS

"Keep the Light On" Project Helps Guyanese Woman Turn Her Life Around



Evan grew up on the small island of Wakenaam in Guyana's largest river, the Essequibo. Her family was poor and her father's alcoholism, which often led to both physical and verbal abuse towards Evan and her mother, made her living situation unbearable. At the age of 19, Evan eloped to escape her life at home, but she quickly found herself in a similar situation when her husband's abusive, alcoholic and womanizing ways surfaced.

Evan bore four sons during their 14 years of marriage. But those 14 years were too much for her. After years of abuse, Evan could no longer handle the burden, so she left her husband and children for a life of commercial sex work and alcoholism.

Her drinking habit and new work life left Evan uneasy and unhappy. But this would change.

Evan was invited by individuals working with commercial sex workers in her area to attend a workshop on HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention supported by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR.) Evan attended the seminar and found the visit to be both compelling and profound.

Evan was an active and engaging participant at the workshop and was soon approached to become a Peer Educator for the PEPFAR-supported "Keep the Light On" project. The project is aimed at building the capacity of commercial sex workers to provide HIV/AIDS education to their peers and to teach them safer sexual practices. Evan eagerly agreed to be trained.

Since becoming a peer educator, Evan has stopped commercial sex work and no longer drinks alcohol. Today, Evan speaks openly about her past life and is widely respected by her community for her candor and knowledge regarding HIV/AIDS. She has remarried and reconnected with her children, who are excited to have her back in their life. They regularly remind Evan that they are proud of her.



Photo by Guyana PEPFAR Team

Evan – a former commercial sex worker – has turned her life around and is now educating peers about safer sexual practices and raising HIV/AIDS awareness through the PEPFAR-supported "Keep the Light On" project.

Now, Evan is truly happy. She said that she feels like she has been given a new lease on life. Asked why she agreed to tell her story and have her picture taken, she said, "I was a commercial sex worker. That was a part of my life and so I have no problem having my picture taken. It was who I was, but [that's] not who I am today."

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Public-Private Partnership Targets Russian Youth



A public-private partnership between the U.S. Government, HealthRight International and Johnson & Johnson was announced last month to prevent the spread of HIV and increase access to treatment and care among street children and other vulnerable youth in St. Petersburg, Russia. This newly-launched partnership builds on a previous collaboration between the U.S. Government and Johnson & Johnson, which established the first municipal drop-in center for street children and HIV-positive youth in St. Petersburg.

“We are very pleased to join Johnson & Johnson and HealthRight International in a partnership to reach the most vulnerable youth with critically needed HIV prevention messages and services,” said Leon Waskin, U.S. Agency for International Development Director in Russia. “I also want to thank the government in St. Petersburg for their support for this effort, both in the past and going forward, which is so important for the project’s success.”

Over the past decade, Russia has experienced one of the fastest growing HIV/AIDS epidemics in the world. There are an estimated 10,000 street children and youth in St. Petersburg, many of whom struggle with substance abuse and other behaviors that increase their risk for HIV/AIDS. Studies have shown that this group in particular has high rates of HIV infection, as well as

limited access to clinical treatment and care.

The U.S. Government, Johnson & Johnson, HealthRight International and its local partner, Doctors to Children, will reach 500 vulnerable youth in St. Petersburg with HIV prevention messages and a broad continuum of services, including mobile voluntary testing and referrals to treatment and care. The project will also develop a cadre of social workers trained in HIV prevention among street youth, and disseminate a package of HIV prevention best practices to government institutions and non-governmental organizations across the city.

“Partnerships such as this — engaging the local community, non-governmental organizations, private support, and public support from both the Russian and U.S. Governments — is exactly the formula we need to ensure that children and youth in crisis not only get assistance today, but have a real chance at a future,” said HealthRight Executive Director Tom Dougherty. “These projects take time and investment, but the pay-off is well worth it.”

Naira Adamian, Managing Director for Janssen-Cilag Russia, the pharmaceutical division of Johnson & Johnson in Russia, agreed.

“Investing in children infected or affected by the disease is a key strategy within our HIV/AIDS philanthropy portfolio,” Adamian said.

Spotlight on ABC: A Comprehensive Strategy for Prevention of Sexual Transmission of HIV/AIDS

PEPFAR supports the most comprehensive, evidence-based prevention program in the world, targeting interventions based on the epidemiology of HIV infection in each country. This includes activities that focus on sexual transmission, mother-to-child transmission, the transmission of HIV through unsafe blood and medical injections, and male circumcision.

Long before PEPFAR was initiated, many nations had already developed their own national HIV prevention strategies that included the ABC (Abstinence, Be Faithful, and correct and consistent Condom use) approach to behavior change. Data that pre-date PEPFAR scale up link adoption of all three of the ABC behaviors to reductions in HIV prevalence. Learning from the evidence, PEPFAR supports all three elements of the ABC strategy in ways appropriate to the epidemiology, social and cultural context, and national strategy of each partner nation.

In fiscal year 2008, PEPFAR-supported programs reached **58.3 million people** through community outreach programs to prevent sexual transmission of HIV/AIDS using the ABC approach. As part of its programs that teach correct and consistent condom use for those who are sexually active, the U.S. Government seeks to ensure an adequate supply of condoms. To this end, the USG has supplied more than **2.2 billion condoms** worldwide from 2004 to 2008.

Please visit the links below to learn more about PEPFAR-supported efforts to prevent sexual transmission of HIV:

- Prevention of Sexual Transmission in the General Population: <http://www.pepfar.gov/press/88253.htm>
- Prevention Programs for Youth: <http://www.pepfar.gov/press/89838.htm>
- Prevention of Sexual Transmission for People Engaged in High-Risk Activity: <http://www.pepfar.gov/press/88332.htm>
- Prevention with Positives: <http://www.pepfar.gov/press/92934.htm>

Engaging People Living with HIV/AIDS in Haiti's Community-based Economic Growth



In Haiti, the United States Government, through the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), has teamed up with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to support community-based economic growth.

PREPEP (Programme de Revitalisation et de Promotion de l'Entente et de la Paix), a short-term job creation project supported by IOM, promotes development in six "hot spots" throughout Haiti, focusing on projects in the areas of agriculture, education, environment, and health and infrastructure rehabilitation.

Eager to involve people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in these activities, IOM partnered with PEPFAR to identify local organizations of PLWHA and to offer employment to their members.

Each PREPEP project incorporates HIV prevention, sensitization and education messages, focusing on both the PLWHA and other Haitians working alongside one another.

To date, PEPFAR has supported 29 projects – creating nearly 2,000 jobs.

With income generated through these employment opportunities, people living with HIV/AIDS have been able to purchase food, pay off debts, enroll their children in school, and buy seeds to start gardens.

Yvrenne Fortune and Saint Hilaire Roignac's story exemplifies the power of PREPEP. Two HIV-positive men looking for work, Fortune and Roignac looked to the PREPEP project for help. And when IOM began its canal rehabilitation project in Les Cayes, they were hired to work on this assignment for a local construction firm.

Hard workers, Fortune and Roignac performed the tasks asked of them well. But as the project came to a close, so did Fortune and Roignac's time with the company. Recognizing the dedication of these two laborers, the mason boss requested that they return a month later for a new project. Both men readily accepted the offer.

This project has helped transform their lives. As a result of Fortune and Roignac's time with this construction company, their long-term employment pros-



Photo by Haiti PEPFAR Team

HIV-positive men were hired to help dig a canal in Haiti thanks to a community-based economic growth project supported by PEPFAR and the International Organization for Migration.

pects have greatly improved because they have gained experience, developed a reputation for quality work, and have been destigmatized within their community.



2009 HIV/AIDS Implementers' Meeting

Windhoek, Namibia
June 10-14, 2009

HIV/AIDS implementers from around the world will gather in Windhoek, Namibia, from June 10-14 for the 2009 HIV/AIDS Implementers' Meeting. The theme of the meeting is "Optimizing the Response: Partnerships for Sustainability."

The meeting gathers together program implementers to share best practices and lessons learned in the fight against global HIV/AIDS.

Information about the meeting, including a draft agenda, is available online at: <http://www.hivimplementers.com>.