REACH Research Alliance to Combat HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS prevention news stories

HIV Makes a TV Debut

SÃO TOMÉ, 20 May 2009 - Twenty years after the first case of HIV infection was recorded in the archipelago of São Tomé and Príncipe, off the coast of Gabon, six people living with HIV/AIDS have decided to take a stand against stigma and discrimination by telling their stories on national television.

A documentary, A Saída do Gueto (Coming out of the Ghetto), produced by the state-run public broadcaster, TVS, is a first for the country, where an estimated 3,000 people -- 1.5 percent of the population of 155,000 -- are living with HIV, according to data from the National Programme for the Fight Against AIDS.

Magda Soares, who discovered her HIV-positive status during a medical check-up in 2006, decided to appear in the film because she believes that discrimination by relatives, in the workplace and on the streets is the biggest problem faced by HIV-positive people. "Nobody went to the market to buy this sickness - all diseases kill when they're not treated, and those who live hiding their HIV/AIDS die as well," she told IRIN/PlusNews.

Ignorance and prejudice

The film is the fruit of a project funded by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), which trained TVS broadcast journalists and technicians in programme production. It premiered on TVS on 15 May, and also on RTP, the Portuguese television network, and Canal France International.

Coming out of the Ghetto not only challenges viewers to question their attitudes to people living with HIV, but also asks for their help. "I call on people to do something for us, the HIV positive and those ill with AIDS," says Celso Carvalho in his testimony.

"This documentary will awaken São Tomean society to become aware of the disease, because I believe that there are people here who still don't believe that AIDS exists," said Jacinto Godinho, the course instructor.

Rita Aleixo, programme coordinator at the international humanitarian organisation, Médicos do Mundo (Doctors of the World), hopes the film will educate people and contribute to reducing the strong AIDS-related stigma in São Tomé and Príncipe. "This documentary is a new era that is opening up in these people's lives," she said.

Celecia Pereira, a lawyer who assists Apoio à Vhida, the country's first association of people living with HIV, said the documentary alone would not be enough to combat stigma. "We don't have any legal instrument to protect the HIV positive from the discrimination they suffer on a daily basis," she said. "The first thing prospective employers ask for is an HIV test; we live in a country in which everybody knows who does and who doesn't have AIDS."

To access this article online, go to http://plusnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=84471.

Giving a Deworming Drug to Girls Could Cut HIV Transmission in Africa

from nytimes.com

Giving an inexpensive deworming drug to millions of girls in rural Africa could substantially reduce transmission of the virus that causes AIDS, researchers say.

The drug praziquantel, which costs only 32 cents per child, would prevent schistosomiasis, a worm disease that starts as a urinary tract infection but, untreated, can lead to female genital sores that make it easier for H.I.V. to enter. Once lesions appear, the drug can kill the worms but not cure the sores, so girls must be protected before they reach sexual maturity.

The study, by researchers from the Sabin Vaccine Institute, Imperial College London and Oslo University Hospital, appears in PLoS Neglected Tropical Diseases.

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There are 207 million cases of schistosomiasis in the world, 90 percent of them in Africa. In Africa, humans typically get it from wading into snail-infested water to swim or wash clothes. The worms leave the snails and burrow into the skin; the first symptom is bloody urine.

The success of a pilot program in Burkina Faso suggested that all the 70 million toddlers and school-age children who are infected in Africa could be treated for $22 million; repeating that every two years for a decade would cost $112 million.

"For this relatively small investment, the reproductive health of young women would be improved," the authors wrote, "and there is a reasonable chance that H.I.V./AIDS transmission can be reduced."

To access this article online, go to http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/26/health/26glob.html?_r=1

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**African HIV/AIDS Experts Set to Meet in Kenya**

**from CRIenglish.com**

Health experts from East African region are set to meet in the western Kenyan lakeside city of Kisumu on Tuesday to discuss mainstreaming HIV and AIDS issues within regional transport policies and planning.

The East African Community (EAC) said on Monday that the May 19-22 regional cross-border transport corridor HIV and Aids Multisectoral stakeholders meeting is expected to bring together over 100 key stakeholders both at the national and regional levels. The statement said the experts and officials are expected from the National Aids Commissions, relevant ministries responsible for Transport, Trade, Health, Harbours, Immigration, Roads, Gender, Youth and Children from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi and Rwanda.

"Each EAC Partner State is expected to send a total of seven technical experts from each of the above mentioned ministries and institutions to attend the four day meeting," the statement said.

Other regional and international collaborating Partners such as Lake Victoria Basin Commission, Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization, USAID, GLIA, IOM, PMAESA, NCTTCA, ECSA will attend the meeting.

The meeting, which is to be officially opened by the EAC Deputy Secretary General in charge of Productive and Social Sector, Jean Claude Nsengiyumva, will also be attended by delegates from the EAC Regional Inter-Parliamentary Forum on Health, Population and Development, which is constituted by members of the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) and the EAC Partner States’ National Parliamentary Committees responsible for Health and Social Affairs, including HIV and AIDS.

The aim of the meeting and field visits is to promote better regional coordination and quality of HIV services provided to Most at Risk Populations (MARPs) by bringing together national and regional level actors working along the major land, sea, ocean transport corridors and in-land waterways in the East African Community Partner States.

The meeting will also provide an update on HIV and AIDS Modes of Transmissions (MOT) studies conducted along the various regional cross-border transport corridors in the EAC Partner States in the recent past; identify regional HIV and AIDS prevention, care, treatment and support intervention strategies that are suitable for communities situated on transit corridors and hubs and those operating within the water transport corridors.

"It will identify the scope for the transport sector to work in partnership with various implementing partners and local communities to mitigate impact of HIV and AIDS along the northern road transport corridor (Mombasa-Malaba-Katuna Corridor) and those operating within the regional water transport corridors and ports within the Lake Victoria Basin region," it said.

Click [here](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/26/health/26glob.html?_r=1) for the full article.

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