



April 2008 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

Nigerian Woman with HIV Finds Happiness in Marriage, Helping Others with HIV



Mercy Egbejule, a Nigerian woman living with HIV, has come a long way since she tested positive for HIV in 2003. Mercy recently married a man who is also HIV-positive, and is looking forward to sharing her life with him. She says that finding someone “with whom together we can fight HIV/AIDS is a big plus.” Mercy is also helping care for orphaned and vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDS after receiving PEPFAR-supported training.

“The children are doing well and the oldest of them is 16 years old. We meet monthly at a resource center in Ipaja, where I teach them about HIV/AIDS, sex education, peer pressure and moral etiquette,” she said. “The joy is that many lives are being affected positively. For me this is unbelievable. Nobody thought I would make it,” she added. “Before medication I was seriously sick with TB. That I am now strong and can give care and support to others is like a mission accomplished for me.”

When she tested positive for HIV in 2003, soon after losing a baby at birth, Mercy was rejected by her boyfriend. The boyfriend, who tested negative, insisted that the baby could not be his. Mercy was also rejected by her family after they learned from one of her siblings that she had HIV. “I went through some hard times,” she says.

Mercy believes that it is crucial for people with HIV not to avoid treatment because of fear of stigmatization. “Stigmatization is real, but it must not be a reason to prevent them [people with HIV] from living their normal lives,” she says. “It is a pity that some people living with the virus stigmatize themselves and refuse to disclose their status to their relations. Disclosing your HIV status to close ones definitely helps in accessing care and support.”

Mercy has been creative in helping others to live with HIV/AIDS. After conducting a survey in the town of Ipaja, she says that “I came up with the idea of Ipaja Community Link to educate [HIV-positive young women] about HIV/AIDS, HIV testing, opportunistic infections, nutrition, and positive living.” She was able to steer 10 young mothers into counseling within a month of proposing this idea.

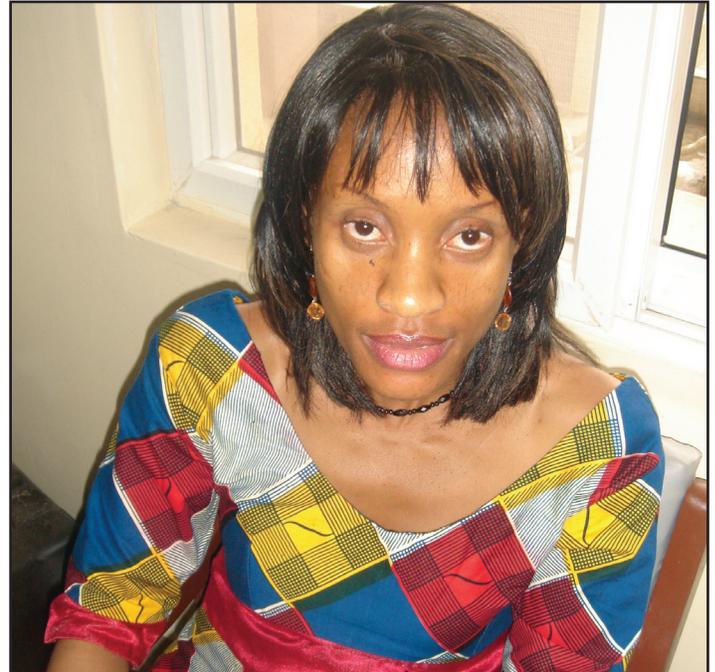


Photo by Nigeria PEPFAR Team

Mercy Egbejule, an HIV-positive Nigerian, is now happily married and helping others who live with HIV.

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President and Mrs. Bush View HIV/AIDS Skit While Visiting Ukraine



During their recent visit to Kiyv, Ukraine, on April 1, 2008, President and Mrs. Bush took time to see a skit on HIV/AIDS supported by PEPFAR through the Peace Corps at School 57 in the city.

In a speech thanking the students for their performance, President Bush urged them to “Keep your education going,

and then contribute to society.” He added: “You can do this in all kinds of ways: You can be a teacher, you can be a doctor, you can be a small business owner; you can contribute to the future of your country by just being a good citizen.”

The full transcript of President Bush's remarks after the performance is available online at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/04/20080401-3.html>.



White House photo by Shealah Craighead

Supported by PEPFAR, students at a school in Kyiv, Ukraine, perform a skit on HIV/AIDS for President and Mrs. Bush.



White House photo by Shealah Craighead

President and Mrs. Bush pose with students from School 57 in Kyiv Tuesday, April 1, 2008, after the Ukrainian teens performed a PEPFAR-supported skit.

HHS Secretary Leavitt Reviews Efforts to Fight HIV/AIDS



As part of a trip to Southeast Asia, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt is reviewing efforts to fight HIV/AIDS. During meetings with government and business officials in Indonesia, Singapore, and Vietnam, he is visiting sites related to the research, care and treatment of influenza and HIV/AIDS. While in Vietnam, Secretary Leavitt is meeting with officials in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Vietnam is one of PEPFAR's 15 focus countries.

“By working together, we can improve the safety of food and other products and build a common defense against disease,” Leavitt said in a statement. “I am excited by the opportunity to work with my counterparts in Southeast Asia against disease, notably influenza and HIV, and to improve the quality of products for our people.”

The full text of a press release from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services on Secretary Leavitt's trip is available at: <http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2008pres/04/20080414c.html>.



2008 HIV/AIDS Implementers' Meeting

Kampala, Uganda

June 3-7, 2008

HIV/AIDS implementers from around the world will gather in Kampala, Uganda, from June 3-7 for the 2008 HIV/AIDS Implementers' Meeting. The meeting, which recognizes the rapid expansion of HIV/AIDS programs worldwide, will focus on building the capacity of local prevention, treatment, and care programs; enhancing quality; and promoting coordination among partners.

The theme of the meeting is “Scaling Up Through Partnerships: Overcoming Obstacles to Implementation.”

Meeting information, including agenda, is available online at: <http://www.hivimplementers.com>.

Artists celebrate PEPFAR Success Stories in Zambia



The success of Zambia in fighting HIV/AIDS was recently celebrated at an art opening sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Lusaka, Zambia.

The opening, hosted by the Public Affairs Section, featured the works of 26 Zambian artists. The works underscored the tenacity and courage shown by Zambian people in their fight against the disease, and reflected how the

U.S. Government has helped in this effort through PEPFAR.

The artists, members of the Visual Arts Council, pursued the theme of "Transforming Lives Through ART." The artists were able to sell many of the pieces on display, further reaching out to the community with visual images promoting social responsibility and HIV/AIDS awareness.



Photo by Zambia PEPFAR Team

Zambia National Arts Council Chairperson Mulenga Kapepwe and Director Victor Makashi chat with Cultural Affairs Assistant Chilufya Chilangwa.



Photo by Zambia PEPFAR Team

Michael Koplovsky, Deputy Chief of Mission in Zambia, examines "Da Uzual Suspect," a multi-media installation with artist Kilarenz Albert. The piece was created by Albert and Rob van Acker.

White House Praises House Passage of Bill to Reauthorize PEPFAR

By a large bipartisan majority, the House of Representatives on April 2 approved the Tom Lantos and Henry J. Hyde U.S. Global Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Reauthorization Act. The 308-to-116 vote is a key milestone in reauthorizing PEPFAR. The Senate is working on its version of the legislation.

"This strong bipartisan vote advances the reauthorization of the life-saving work of the PEPFAR program," White House Press Secretary Dana Perino said in a statement: "This legislation preserves the important principles that have made PEPFAR successful," the statement continued. "The President wants to thank the members of Congress who supported this legislation, particularly the hard work of House Foreign Affairs Chairman Howard Berman and Ranking Member Ileana Ros-Lehtinen. He looks forward to working with the Senate, and hopes they will consider PEPFAR legislation soon."

The full text of the statement by the White House Press Secretary on passage of the House bill is available online at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/04/20080402-9.html>.