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## African Services Represents at the International Aids Conference in Vienna

On July 20, thousands poured into the streets of downtown Vienna. They were clergy and sex workers, doctors and drug users, members of the LGBT community and human rights activists—seemingly disparate groups united in a single cause, to recognize the importance of human rights in the global struggle against HIV/AIDS. They had come from around the world to participate in the International AIDS Conference, held in Austria July 18 to July 23.



Andrea Panjwani, Supervising Attorney, and Amanda Lugg, Director of Advocacy, represent ASC at the IAS Conference in Geneva.

We traveled from New York to attend the conference as delegates, participating in workshops and meeting HIV activists from across the globe. The entire week was a powerful experience for us, but it was especially moving to walk through the streets of Vienna on the day of the march and see the red ribbons draped across the entrances of museums and government buildings, with posters advertising museum exhibits and film festivals featuring HIV-positive artists. Large groups of African women walked together, cheering and proudly displaying t-shirts that proclaimed "HIV-positive."

The energy from the march spilled over into the rest of the week, as an estimated 19,300 advocates from 197 countries gathered to discuss one of the fundamental issues in the global AIDS pandemic, human rights. Although HIV/AIDS has existed on a global scale for more than 25 years, only now is the world community beginning to come together and acknowledge that fighting for the fundamental rights and freedoms of all peoples is an essential element for defeating this virus.

During the week, the conference delegates heard speeches by the likes of Bill Clinton and Bill Gates, as well as a range of world leaders, scholars, artists, sex workers, and others committed to doing innovative world to end AIDS worldwide. Regardless of the topic or presenter, the recurring theme was that we will never achieve universal access to prevention, treatment, and care unless we empower the most marginalized: women and girls, children and youth, and criminalized populations such as men who have sex with men, people who use drugs and sex workers. These populations are most in need of HIV services and are the least likely to receive them.

As African Services Committee representatives, we participated in several fascinating workshops that we hope will strengthen the work we do with our clients in the future. The topics ranged from the intersection of HIV and violence against women and girls to the barriers immigrants face in accessing comprehensive HIV services and treatment. We talked with experts about the high prevalence of HIV among African-Americans. Although the African Diaspora is less than 13% of the U.S. population, it comprises about half of all newly diagnosed cases and approximately 50% of all people living with HIV/AIDS.

As a result of the learning, information gathering and networking at World AIDS Conference, African Services staff will be more equipped to empower its clients, advocate for change at the local, national and international levels, and raise legal challenges on behalf of our clients.

--Andrea Panjwani

## News and Activities

### A Happy Ending: Mother and Son are Reunited



Denzel & Tembeni pose for a picture at JFK Airport

For the past two and a half years, Tembeni Fazo, an HIV Peer Counselor at African Services from Zimbabwe, has endured a parent's worst nightmare-separation from her young son, Denzel. But now, thanks to the hard work of the ASC legal team and the generosity of the staff and board, that is about to change. Tembeni and her 12 year old son were recently granted political asylum, allowing the boy, who still lives in Zimbabwe, to join his mother in the United States.

African Services lawyers guided the family through the asylum process and, once the case was won, staff and friends of ASC chipped in to buy Denzel's plane ticket from Harare. He arrived in New York on August 18th. THANK YOU to everyone who contributed and congratulations to the Fazo family

### Would You Do It?

African Services' HIV Anti-Stigma Campaign Challenges You to Stand Up



Would you stand up for people with HIV? That is the question behind the Would You Do It campaign, a new anti-stigma initiative launched by African Services Committee in partnership with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and Public Health Solutions.

The campaign, which aims to break the silence and shame surrounding HIV in African and Caribbean communities, challenges the immigrant community to confront stigma, and make the choice to stand in solidarity with those who are HIV+. It is a simple message, being delivered in a bold and innovative way.

"People are confronted every day by campaigns for various social causes," says Stephanie Kaplan, Communications Director, "We wanted to find more effective ways to reach our target audience. Whether that means working with influential and respected members of the community who deliver our message, stenciling the streets of Harlem with the "Why Stand?" logo or handing out special campaign condoms, we're going to do everything we can to get people's attention-and keep it."

Choose to Stand Up will focus in particular on immigrant communities, where stigma remains one of the primary barriers to the treatment of HIV. African immigrants make up 5 percent of the population of New York City and a similar portion of HIV diagnoses. However, experts suggest the prevalence of the virus among this group may be much higher, since many refuse testing in fear of being discriminated against by friends and family.

"Immigrants in the U.S. are particularly affected, as they are struggling to gain footing in new surroundings, thus creating barriers to HIV prevention, testing and care," explains Kim Nichols, Co-Executive Director of African Services Committee. "Under these circumstances many develop debilitating internalized stigma and are overwhelmed by feelings of worthlessness and despair."

Several notable African and Caribbean New Yorkers will participate in Choose to Stand Up, including Imam Souleymane Konate of the Masjid Aqsa mosques, Madoussou Traore, the President of the Malian Women's Association, and the critically acclaimed electronic band Burkina Electric. The campaign will reach out to African and Caribbean immigrants in the Harlem area in various ways including online at [www.whystand.org](http://www.whystand.org), on social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook, in print ads in community newspapers, and subway platform posters.

Choose to Stand Up is part of African Services' HIV Stigma Initiative, a multi-year project that aims to improve health in the African immigrant community through creative outreach and communication that fosters dialogue, challenges stigma, and promotes understanding and compassion in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

## African Services Gets New Additions

It's been a busy summer here at African Services. Sadly, we have had to say goodbye to several of our team members, but as old friends go, new friends emerge. We would like to introduce you to some new additions to the staff:



**Lola Taiwo** joins African Services as our new deputy director of health programs. She has worked for several years as an advocate for HIV positive immigrants, most recently with the New Jersey based Hyacinth AIDS Foundation and the Nigerian Healthcare Foundation. Lola recently completed a Masters in public administration at NYU's Wagner School of Public Service. She is of



Nigerian and Jamaican descent and is proficient in Spanish and French, in addition to English.



**Theodora Diwouta** comes to African Services to serve as a medical interpreter and escort. She will aid clients in navigating health services in New York City, helping new immigrants become comfortable with the resources available to them at American hospitals and giving them confidence by allowing them to communicate with doctors in their own language. Herself an immigrant from Cameroon and a former client at African Services, Theodora is passionate about helping fellow African immigrant women build lives for themselves in the U.S.. "I want to help women have the same chances I've had," she says. Theodora is fluent in French and English.



**Alizata Traore** will serve as the newest family case manager at African Services. As a longtime volunteer for the legal program at ASC, Alizata is already a familiar presence in the office and comes to her new position having established close relationships with many African Services clients. An advocate for the rights of immigrants, she speaks Bambara and French, in addition to English. She is originally from the Ivory Coast.



**Sarah Park** is African Services' Fiscal Manager, responsible for overseeing all general ledger activities, including accounts payable, accounts receivable, and cash disbursements. She holds a BA in accounting from Baruch College, the City University of New York. Before she joined African Services Committee, she worked in a public accounting firm. Sarah was born and raised in South Korea, and speaks Korean, as well as English.

## Policy and Advocacy Update

### Broken Promises Kill, No Retreat, Fund AIDS! Broken Promises Kill, No Retreat, Fund AIDS!



This was the chant that signaled the beginning of the march of over 1000 delegates and community members (and endorsed by 196 organizations from around the world) and the opening ceremony, the official start to AIDS 2010, the International AIDS Conference.

Weeks before over 19,000 participants arrived in the Austrian capital of Vienna to attend the bi-annual gathering, activists had been planning the most effective ways of challenging the broken promises of the US Administration, the retreat of wealthy donor countries and the lack of contributions, which have already been pledged, to fund the global fight against HIV/AIDS.

With 15 million in need of immediate AIDS treatment and only 5.2 million receiving it, we have clearly fallen far short of the goal of universal access by 2010; a commitment made by G8 members in Gleneagles and, subsequently, heads of states and governments at the 2005 UN World Summit. Similarly, if we have any hope at all of achieving the UN Millennium Development Goal 6 of "halting and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS," by 2015, resource promises made must be promises kept.

#### The Broken Promise

In 2008, in response to activists' demands, Senator Obama made a public declaration that should he be elected president, the Obama Administration would continue and improve upon the PEPFAR program and ensure the full funding of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria. This would be achieved, Senator Obama promised, by increasing

funding of the US' global AIDS response. Instead his 2011 budget put a halt to this: it cut \$50 million from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria and gave less than a 2% increase (less than the cost of inflation) to global AIDS funding overall.

Now is not the time to turn our back on the advances made in the treatment, care and support of those living with HIV/AIDS, when testing trends are so positive, when the costs of medicines have plummeted to new lows, and when scientific research and modeling shows that treatment significantly reduces the risk of HIV transmission,

Even Nobel Peace Prize winner, Archbishop Desmond Tutu spoke out recently in a New York Times op-ed piece, saying, "I appreciate that tough financial times require the United States government to cut spending, but scaling back America's financial commitments to AIDS programs could wipe away decades of progress in Africa."

### **The Retreat**

Solemn promises to achieve universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support have been made repeatedly by world leaders over the past 5 years but what is in fact happening is a visible retreat by these same wealthy donors, resulting in suspended treatment plans and lives lost.

Dr. Peter Mugenyi, runs the Joint Clinical Research Center AIDS program in Kampala, Uganda. He recently brought to the world's attention that though significant AIDS treatment progress had been made in his country, primarily by the US PEPFAR program, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention told Ugandan clinics in October 2009 that they should "expect a set flat-lined budget for antiviral drug procurement." This has resulted in new AIDS patients being turned away from treatment and put on a waiting list, where a treatment slot only opens up when another patient dies.

Yes, the world is in the throes of the worst financial crisis in decades, but when trillions of dollars are miraculously found for financial sector bailouts and billions more spent on war, the stump line that "more money for global health just isn't there", rings decidedly hollow.

### **The Funding**

Since its official launch in 2002, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, a unique multilateral funding mechanism to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, has become the main source of funding to fight AIDS worldwide. However, to meet its anticipated funding needs in order to sustain its current obligations and launch new annual rounds of grant funding, it is the responsibility of wealthy donor countries to stand by their pledges and commit the funds necessary to a program that every year saves the lives of men, women and children in 144 countries around the world with large scale prevention, treatment and care programs.

We speak of wealthy countries honoring their commitments to global AIDS funding, but that is not license to ignore the responsibility, indeed, the promises, of less wealthy nations.

In the Abuja Declaration adopted in 2001, African leaders declared that "AIDS is a state of emergency in the continent" and pledged "to set a target of allocating at least 15% of our annual budget to the improvement of the health sector. We undertake to mobilize all the human, material and financial resources required to provide care and support and quality treatment to our populations infected with HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other related infections."

However, Africa's people still wait.

Ideas on innovative financing were highlighted in Vienna as a way to bridge these critical funding gaps. Western leaders are looking at what is being called the "Robin Hood Tax" in Europe, and the "Financial Transaction Tax" (FTT) in the US. Both plans would place a tiny 0.005% tax on all major bank transactions such as bonds, derivatives and currency transactions. It is estimated that this small taxation on the banking industry could leverage over \$100 million a year which could be spent on global health and climate change programming.

AIDS treatment has had dramatic success in extending and improving lives in both rich countries and poor. It has also created positive synergies for other health services, it has rewarded people for knowing their status, and it has spawned the most powerful movement for global health justice the world has ever known.

But the cold hard facts are that there are 33 million people living with HIV worldwide. Each year, 2.1 million people die and 2.7 million more are infected. Two-thirds of HIV cases are found in sub-Saharan Africa. Half of new HIV cases are young people, and more than half are women.

Untreated, our brothers and sisters will die - however, with relatively modest and pragmatic increases in funding and programming, the delayed goal of universal access to comprehensive HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and care can, and must be reached.

*P.S. As we go to press, advocacy organizations in the US and Uganda welcomed the announcement that the U.S. global AIDS program, PEPFAR, has reversed its severe restrictions that capped enrollment of new HIV patients on life saving treatment in Uganda, following criticism and outcry from people with HIV, clinicians, advocates, and public health experts in the US, Uganda and around the world.*

--Amanda Lugg

## Fun in the City

### Staff Recommendations

**Dinsiru Fikru**, African Services Supporter recommends...



#### Kicks for Kids

Morningside Park  
110th Street and Morningside Avenue  
[www.asckicksforkids.com](http://www.asckicksforkids.com)

Do you have a child between the ages of 8-12 years old? Do they love to play soccer or would they like to learn? Would you like to meet other parents in your community? Then sign up for Kicks for Kids a co-ed 4-week summer soccer camp!

**Cost:** FREE

Click [here](#) to sign up

**Kim Nichols**, Co-Executive Director



#### Central Park Conservancy Film Festival

New York City's iconic skyline, buildings and neighborhoods take center stage at The Central Park Conservancy Film Festival, which brings free movies to the heart of Manhattan for five nights, Aug. 24-28. To create our "Iconic New York" theme, we chose movies that feature New York's most famous locations and sights - from the Empire State Building in King Kong to the City's subway in The Taking of Pelham 1 2 3.

The 8th annual festival will be held for the first time in the landscape north of Sheep Meadow, behind Mineral Springs (mid-Park at 69th Street). Enter the Park at 72nd Street.

All screenings begin at 8:00 pm, rain or shine. Gates open to the public at 6:30 pm. Bring the whole family and a picnic basket and enjoy a fabulous movie in the glow of the NY skyline!

Click [here](#) for the movie schedule which includes such films as *Fame*, *The Taking of Pelham 1 2 3*, *Saturday Night Fever*, *King Kong*, and *Manhattan*.

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**Do you have any recommendations? Email us at [info@africanservices.org](mailto:info@africanservices.org) and let us know!!**

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