



Press release

NEW GLOBAL COMMUNITY AIDS AWARD LAUNCHED

Community leadership to be honoured at 2006 Toronto AIDS Conference

1 December 2005 (NEW YORK) – A new international award celebrating community action on AIDS was launched today on World AIDS Day to honour grassroots leadership in fighting the AIDS epidemic.

The first-ever Red Ribbon Award: Celebrating Community Leadership and action on AIDS will be presented at the XVI International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2006), to be held in Toronto, Canada, from 13-18 August 2006. The award is sponsored by the Leadership and Community programmes of the International AIDS Conference.

“Communities lie at the forefront of addressing the challenges of the AIDS epidemic. Solutions that work cannot be imposed from above,” said Gracia Violeta Ross Quiroga, Co-Chair of the AIDS 2006 Community Programme Committee. “In all corners of our world, communities working in the buildings, hospitals, villages, have the power and are already reversing the threat of the AIDS pandemic.”

The initiative is supported by a number of organizations including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), on behalf of the ten UNAIDS Cosponsors, and the International AIDS Society.

“Communities lie at the heart of responding to the HIV/AIDS challenge,” said Kemal Dervis, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). “In communities across the world, leadership, courage and resilience are shaping the response to the epidemic, and determining our ability to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Honouring their work and providing resources to scale up community initiatives is essential in the fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS.”

All 25 finalists of the award will receive a monetary prize: 20 finalists will receive US\$ 5,000 each and five category winners will receive US\$ 20,000 each. The five award categories for outstanding leadership are planned in the following areas:

- Providing access to care, treatment and support for people living with HIV/AIDS at community level;
- Addressing stigma and discrimination related to HIV/AIDS at community level;
- Addressing gender inequalities that fuel the HIV/AIDS epidemic at community level;
- Promoting HIV/AIDS prevention programmes at community level;
- Providing support to AIDS orphans and other vulnerable children.

“Solutions must involve people whose lives are most affected,” said Dr Peter Piot, Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). “Communities are able to find ways to address the most difficult challenges of the AIDS epidemic. This kind of leadership shows us in practical terms how to make a difference in the global response one

community at a time.”

AIDS 2006's Leadership and Community Programme committees aim to provide voice and recognition to communities, especially those who are worst-affected and most often neglected. The committees will appoint a high-profile Advisory Board that will initially identify 25 finalists, with a further meeting just before the Toronto conference to select the five final recipients. Awards will be announced in Toronto.

“We hope that the celebration of these grass roots leadership efforts will act as a catalyst for other communities to improve, expand and duplicate these excellent initiatives elsewhere,” said Bishop Gunnar Stalsett, Co-Chair of the AIDS 2006 Leadership Programme. “This type of ongoing, weighted and consistent leadership on AIDS at the community level is desperately needed if we are to get ahead of the disease.”

Applications will be accepted from 1 December 2005 through 31 March 2006. Information can be found on www.redribbonaward.org or by contacting redribbonaward@undp.org. All community-based organizations working to reverse or address the AIDS epidemic are encouraged to apply.

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

UNAIDS brings together ten UN agencies in a common effort to fight the AIDS epidemic. As the main advocate for global action against AIDS, UNAIDS leads, strengthens and supports an expanded response to the epidemic. It aims to prevent HIV transmission, provide care and support to those living with HIV, reduce the vulnerability of individuals and communities to AIDS, and alleviate the impact of the epidemic.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. The organization is on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges. As they develop local capacity, they draw on the people of UNDP and its wide range of partners. UNDP is a founding cosponsor of UNAIDS.

The XVI International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2006)

AIDS2006 is one of the most important gatherings for the release and discussion of key scientific developments in the fight against HIV/AIDS. It brings together the movement of people responding to the epidemic to share lessons learned and together stake out the road ahead. In doing so, the conference directly affects the lives of those living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. The theme of AIDS 2006 is *Time to Deliver*, reflecting the demands of the epidemic for increased accountability from all stakeholders to fulfill commitments made.

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