



THE AIDS INSTITUTE

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AFRICAN DELEGATION OF HEALTH OFFICIALS VISIT WASHINGTON TO DISCUSS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PEPFAR PROGRAM IN COMBATING AIDS, MALARIA, AND TB

Group co-convened by The AIDS Institute and The Whitaker Group

WASHINGTON, DC – March 13, 2008. This past week a delegation of 15 leading African health officials representing Ghana, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Zambia, Lesotho, and Swaziland was convened in Washington by a partnership between The AIDS Institute and The Whitaker Group. The purpose was to provide information to Congress and the Administration about the importance of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), an international aid program that targets AIDS, malaria, and TB prevention, care, and treatment worldwide. Dr. Gene Copello, Executive Director of The AIDS Institute commented: "The delegation visit to Washington comes during a crucial time as Congress is currently moving on reauthorizing the PEPFAR program which expires on September 30 of this year.....its important for our policymakers to hear directly from health officials in the countries where aid from the United States is being provided."

James Sykes, Global Program Coordinator for The AIDS Institute said "We worked with our fellow global advocates through the Global AIDS Roundtable (GAR) to develop recommendations for reauthorization of PEPFAR. We submitted those recommendations to staff of the House Foreign Affairs and the Senate Foreign Relations Committees for consideration as they drafted their versions of the legislation. As we visited with each of the congressional offices, it became obvious that the voices of Africa, where PEPFAR is primarily implemented were missing from the discussion. That is why this delegation visit was so important, to reinforce the importance of sound recommendations."

Dr. Steven Shongwe, Executive Secretary of the East, Central, and Southern African Health Community (ESCA), speaking on behalf of the delegation said, "We first want to thank the United States for assisting Africa. PEPFAR is saving lives. We are thankful for the opportunity to come and express our gratitude, but also to speak to need for flexibility going forward. Flexibility – depending on the needs of the population and the type of epidemic".

Dr. Cesar Caceres, Board President of The AIDS Institute said: "The AIDS Institute was delighted to convene this important delegation along with The Whitaker Group. Visits and discussions the delegation had with Members of Congress, congressional staff, non-governmental organizations, and the State Department provided opportunities for an African perspective on the importance of PEPFAR to be expressed."

Copello concluded: "PEPFAR is an important global program for the prevention, care, and treatment of AIDS, malaria, and TB. It saves lives through the provision of critical aid to the developing world and helps to create sustainable, flexible, and quality healthcare systems. The AIDS Institute commends Congress and the Administration for continuing to move forward in a bipartisan manner to reauthorize this program in a timely fashion."

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For more information and to become involved in AIDS advocacy work, please contact
The AIDS Institute at: (202) 835-8373, or by email at: Info@theaidsinstitute.org or www.TheAIDSInstitute.org

The AIDS Institute is a nonprofit agency that promotes action for social change
through public policy research, advocacy and education.