

# Global Strategies for HIV Prevention *Newsletter*



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Each year the number of HIV infections increases unabated. There are times when we wonder if number fatigue sets in. Can an increase of 14,000 new infections each day be comprehended without seeing those who are infected, or listening to those who desperately need health care?

As the epidemic continues to expand we focused on maximizing our resources in areas of prevention. Projects were selected based on their impact locally as well as those which could give us insight into how to maximize prevention programs. Our donations increased significantly, allowing us to respond to more requests for funding and expand our programs into additional countries.

## **Program Highlights**

***Dominican Republic:*** We conducted a workshop in Santo Domingo to assist non-Government organizations in their efforts to nationalize programs to prevent HIV transmission from mothers to infants. The percent of HIV infected individuals is officially 2% with indications that it may be higher in pregnant women. We provided funding for a full time pediatrician to coordinate a prevention program in Santo Domingo, surrounding cities, and rural areas.

***China:*** This was our second visit to China. On this occasion we were accompanied by Dr. Cathy Wilfert from the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation and Dr. Sam Katz, a pediatric infectious disease expert from Duke University. We visited HIV programs and lectured in Beijing and Xinjiang, the most northern province of China. We are concerned about the rapidly increasing HIV epidemic in this region of China, which similar to the southern Chinese province of Yunnan, is being fueled by intravenous heroin use. It will undoubtedly rapidly affect pregnant women and their children unless preventive measures are aggressively instituted. There is a critical need for immediate educational material and training of health care workers to avert large increases in new HIV infections.

***Chennai, India:*** Much of the HIV epidemic is concentrated in rural areas, often at a distance from hospitals and clinics. Dr. NM Samuel, an Advisory Board member, asked us to support a 7-day intensive training course for 360 Village Health Nurses in the Village of Namakkal, India. The course began with a pre-test to determine existing knowledge of HIV and ended with a post-test to evaluate the effectiveness of the training. The Village Health Nurses learned about HIV prevention, voluntary counseling and testing, and the use of rapid HIV tests. Course work

included distribution of written material in Tamil. Amazingly, the cost for an entire week of training including travel, food and accommodations was only \$4,300 - about \$12 per person.

***South Africa:*** Many of us do not realize the courage that is required for some physicians to provide treatment to prevent HIV infection. Dr. Costa Gazi, located in one of the poorest regions of South Africa, provides health care to women and children with HIV infection. Because of the complex political nature of the South African government, he has had difficulty in openly providing AZT or nevirapine to prevent HIV transmission from mothers to infants. It became a moral issue as to how long life saving drugs could be withheld. When we read his own personal journey including imprisonment by the apartheid regime for 3 years and now threatened by the current government if he uses AZT or nevirapine, we responded by providing funds to purchase enough drugs to treat 750 HIV infected pregnant women and their infants. We wish Dr. Gazi well.

***The Durban Declaration:*** Several months prior to the International AIDS Conference held in Durban, South Africa, a group of dissidents began a campaign to discredit HIV as the cause of AIDS. The timing was undoubtedly an attempt to confuse and divert attention away from the tragic spread of the epidemic. While the true motives of the dissidents are not fully understood, with the International HIV/AIDS conference fast approaching, there was a growing consensus among scientists that the voice of the dissidents should be countered. Global Strategies for HIV Prevention moved quickly. Within weeks a "Durban Declaration" was drafted. Over 5,000 scientists from 120 countries and 13 Nobel Prize recipients signed on - all in 4 weeks. (The power of the Internet.) The Durban Declaration, now a historic document, affirming HIV as the cause of AIDS was published in the prestigious scientific journal "Nature" and can be viewed on the web ([www.nature.com](http://www.nature.com) - search "Durban Declaration"). It has been translated into French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Kiswahili, and Hindi.

***Our Support of Other Organizations:*** International Justice Mission: We first met Gary Haugen at a World Vision conference where he told the story of his defense of Indian children from indenture. (The story has been featured on 60 minutes.) Recently he opened a legal defense center in Nairobi, Kenya to help HIV infected women and children who have their inheritance rights taken away. HIV infected women and children have few or no advocates, and virtually no income. Without land, they are forced into a life of poverty or become street children who are sexually and economically abused. We have focused on Kenya as one of the countries to move prevention programs forward.

### **Notes from East Africa**

Exciting stories continue to emerge from participants of our education and training workshops. Participants are implementing community education programs at the local level and home based care programs have been expanded resulting in improved care for those infected by HIV/AIDS.

***Integrated training workshop March 25-31, 2001:*** Mombasa was the venue for a reunion of community based health care workers who had participated in a workshop in Nairobi in 1999. They were in Mombasa to update their knowledge, report on the implementation of their action

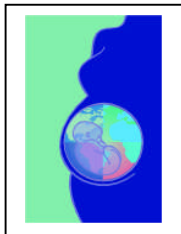
plans and to act as mentors to 80 new participants from Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi and Mozambique.

Outcomes:

- New collaborations were created for local projects
- Within provinces, new networks are forming
- Local home based care; community education and skills training programs have multiplied as participants have implemented their action plans. Computer training

**Concurrent Workshop:** A group of seven orphans received comprehensive training from Dr. Gary Selnow. Supported by the Firelight Foundation, ([www.firelightfoundation.org](http://www.firelightfoundation.org)) WIRED ([wiredinternational.org](http://wiredinternational.org)) teamed with Global Strategies for HIV Prevention to provide orphaned youth with access to computer education and skill development. Dr. Selnow wrote: "These young people had never before seen a computer. By the end of the week, they had acquired a remarkable set of computer skills, were communicating by e-mail, and conducting complicated Internet searches. They closed the weeklong training by teaching nearly 200 workshop participants how to integrate digital photos into text, to do a Web search, and send e-mail."

## Upcoming Events



***3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Global Strategies for the Prevention of HIV Transmission from Mothers to Infants. Kampala, Uganda September 2001***

The second international conference on Global Strategies for HIV the Prevention of HIV Transmission from Mothers to Infants was so successful that we were urged to immediately begin planning for the third conference and to hold it in a developing country. Because Uganda has shown so much commitment to slowing the epidemic and because they have been successful in prevention of HIV by means of a strong national message starting with President Museveni, the conference will be held in Kampala, September 9-13, 2001.

The conference (and our workshops) would not be possible without our friends and collaborators in other organizations - the American Foundation for AIDS Research, the Call to Action Project of the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, Harvard AIDS, the National Institutes of Health, the CDC, the Fogarty International Center, and the many committed individuals in the pharmaceutical industry. We are particularly pleased that funds are available for over 200 scholarships for individuals from developing countries who would not otherwise be able to attend. (See our web site [www.GlobalStrategies.org](http://www.GlobalStrategies.org) and click on the international conference logo for more details.)

### **Workshops: Malawi and Mozambique**

We have been invited to replicate our Integrated training program in Malawi and Mozambique. Workshops in these countries will take place in August and October respectively. The importance of these workshops is reflected in the comments of one of our past participants.

*"I am very grateful for your assistance to our group. This has really helped us to reach where we are. I must tell you that AIDS is hitting our community very hard. Our district and division are now leading with the highest prevalence rate (34%). We are currently burying 2-3 people every week. This is not a very good scenario. I am spending almost all of my time either visiting the sick, or counseling them. Our financial situation may be too much for you. I am just counting on you as one who understands our situation. Please help us where you can. We will assure you of the best utilization of these funds. If you can help us actualize our dream, you can count on us to have a project worthy of (your) association. We have the experience and capacity to do this. You will not be ashamed to be associated with us."*

### **Save A Life Update**

We are fortunate to be able to continue our "Save a Life" program, providing life saving nevirapine to hospital and clinics in the developing world. With the financial help of many individuals and the now almost \$150,000 received from national Presbyterian churches we are assisting over 40 hospitals and clinics in 15 different countries. In less than a year we will reach over 30,000 HIV infected pregnant women and their infants.

There is additional good news. Several months ago the Catholic Medical Mission Board, one of our new collaborators, informed us that they would be able to obtain the combined mother and infant dose of nevirapine in certain countries for 85 cents instead of the \$4 discounted dose that we had been using. In these locations, with each \$4, we can treat 5 times as many HIV infected infants and save 5 times as many lives.

Arthur J Ammann MD, President

Natasha L Martin, FIMLS, Program Director



Tax exempt donations may be sent to:  
Global Strategies for HIV Prevention  
104 Dominican Drive  
San Rafael, California 94901