



# PEPtalk

News you can use from PEPFAR Côte d'Ivoire

No. 10, April 2010

## Coordinator's Corner

In February, the PEPFAR Côte d'Ivoire team took a step back from day-to-day management of its \$120 million HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and treatment program to engage in an internal review designed to help streamline decision-making, improve efficiencies, and ultimately improve program impact. Besides working on organizational effectiveness and strategic plans, the team developed statements of vision and values to which we aspire. Let us know how we're doing. ...



### PEPFAR Côte d'Ivoire

#### Vision

**A strong, healthy Côte d'Ivoire where everyone, at his or her level of responsibility, is engaged to prevent HIV infections and improve the well-being of those infected or affected by HIV.**

#### Our Team's Work Values

- Collaboration
- Innovation
- Transparency
- Continuous learning
- Shared accountability

#### Principles That Guide Our Actions

- Pursuit of quality
- Pursuit of efficiency
- Capacity building and national and local ownership
- Coordinated action
- Evidence-based action

**Jennifer Walsh**  
PEPFAR Country Coordinator



## On the move

World TB Day highlights successes and challenges in the fight against the No. 1 killer of people with HIV. Please see "News in Brief" on Page 2.

For more on the national response to HIV:  
[www.mlsida.gouv.ci](http://www.mlsida.gouv.ci)

## New horizons

### 'I started to realize that I mattered'

#### Success Story

**D**jakaridja was 11 when his mother, widowed and HIV-positive, sent her four sons to live with an uncle in Abobo, a high-density suburb of Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

"Except for a place to sleep and supper, we had to fend for ourselves," Djakaridja recalls. "I started collecting bottles and scrap metal to resell, I worked on a mini-bus. ... I ran with a group of friends that did bad things – we even stole. ..."

None of the boys was attending school. Sidibe Minata, who had harbored high hopes for her eldest son, started to fear his influence on his younger brothers.

"I knew that my attitude was really affecting my mother and making her sick, but I didn't

know how to stop," Djakaridja says. "I wanted to learn metal-working, but who would pay for my training?"

During this dark time, visits by social workers from PEPFAR partner AVSI offered a ray of light. AVSI provides care and support for 5,400 orphans and vulnerable children, as well as capacity building for government social centers and local community-based organizations.

"It was like a miracle – they listen to me and give me advice," says Djakaridja, who started hanging out at the AVSI office and joining 250 other kids for educational and recreational activities on Wednesdays and Saturdays. "I started to realize that I mattered, my family and I."

Through AVSI, the family has obtained access to schooling, health care, and an income-generating activity. Djakaridja's dream started coming true when he was able to register for a residential training program in metal work.

"I'm taking a new path in life, so that later I can help my mother and my brothers," the 15-year-old says. "I won't be a cause of worry for them anymore, and my old friends want to follow my example."

"Today," says his mother, "I am proud of my first-born son."



Instead of scrounging in the streets, Djakaridja is learning to write and do metal work.

## HIV fear blocks blood donation, CNTS finds

**W**ith PEPFAR support, the National Blood Transfusion Service (CNTS) of Côte d'Ivoire is meeting the challenge of providing safe blood products by screening 100% of collected blood for HIV as well as hepatitis B and C and syphilis.

But to ensure adequate supplies of safe blood for a population of 20 million, the CNTS must go far beyond the laboratory to identify and address factors that motivate individuals to give or not to give blood. When researchers surveyed more than 2,400 donors (19%) and non-donors (82%) about their knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) regarding blood donation, they got some astonishing answers.

"The major barrier to giving blood in Côte d'Ivoire," concluded CNTS Director Dr. Séidou Konaté, "remains the fear of knowing one's HIV status."

The CNTS relies on non-remunerated volunteer donors, tests all donated blood for HIV and other transfusion-transmissible infections, and offers all donors their test results. Despite rigorous pre-screening to prevent donations from high-risk individuals, 0.15% of regular donors and 1.28% of new donors last year tested positive for HIV.

Fear of being identified as HIV-positive was the most widely cited deterrent to donating blood (cited by 39% of donors and 63% of non-donors) in the nationwide KAP survey. Other major deterrents included a lack of nearby donation

centers, information, or time.

The CNTS manages 11 blood centers through a computerized network and a team of physicians, transfusion experts, nurses, lab techs, data collectors, administrative staff, and community mobilizers. PEPFAR, Social and Scientific Systems Inc., the World Health Organization, the African Development Bank, the European Development

Fund, and other partners have supported expansion and capacity strengthening that have contributed to improved health outcomes, particularly in complicated childbirths and cases of pediatric anemia.

**Dr. Konaté** The CNTS collects, tests, and distributes products from more than 120,000 units of blood collected annually. But despite donor clubs, volunteer community educators, and frequent donation campaigns, the number of regular blood donors (those who give at least twice a year) still falls short. While the number of donations has increased each year, the CNTS still needs about 54,000 additional blood units per year to cover national needs.

The KAP study results will help the CNTS refine donor recruitment campaigns and mobilization efforts, create educational tools to debunk myths about donation, and define strategies for strengthening linkages between blood donation and HIV counseling and testing.

Survey results, which were compiled and analyzed in January 2010, will be available in July.

**Partner Profile**

**Who:** **U.S. Department of State Political / Economic Department**

Project Director: Kendall Moss

**What:** With PEPFAR support, the Pol/Econ department of the U.S. Embassy is promoting HIV prevention in the private sector through three initiatives:

- HIV information in farmer field schools, in collaboration with ANADER and Cargill, a U.S. agro-industrial company.

- Training for HIV focal points to lead prevention activities in small businesses, through a national network of small business associations (CECI).

- A national hotline for accurate HIV/AIDS information, to be re-established in collaboration with the PLWHA organization Ruban Rouge.

**When:** Started in 2008

**Where:** Cocoa fields in western Côte d'Ivoire, Abidjan

**How to Contact:** [MossKD@state.gov](mailto:MossKD@state.gov), 22 49 40 00



**Public Affairs Section**

Director: Sita Chakrawarti

**What:** With PEPFAR

support, the PAS of the U.S.

Embassy applies its media and public diplomacy expertise to HIV prevention through two primary strategies:

- HIV/AIDS Road Shows that work with local organizations across the country to organize multimedia / video presentations with interactive question/debate sessions for youth, religious, parent, and other groups. Sessions focus on HIV prevention and making healthy lifestyle choices, as well as highlighting the availability of treatment and care services in their neighborhood.

- Regular contact with local and national news media, including informational sessions with journalists and news conferences, to highlight HIV/AIDS messages and PEPFAR partner accomplishments.

**When:** Started in 2008

**Where:** Selected sites across the country

**How to Contact:** [ChakrawartiSL@state.gov](mailto:ChakrawartiSL@state.gov), 22 49 40 00

**What Else:** The Pol/Econ and PAS department, whose diplomatic mission is to promote U.S. interests and understanding, have creatively expanded their reach to include the fight against HIV/AIDS.

**Contribute to PEPtalk!**

Do you have a news item, a story idea, a good photo? An insightful commentary on an important issue? Share it. Send it to us at [peptalk@ci.cdc.gov](mailto:peptalk@ci.cdc.gov).

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[www.mlsida.gov.ci](http://www.mlsida.gov.ci)  
<http://abidjan.usembassy.gov/PEPFAR.html>

**World TB Day:** Hundreds of officials and activists gathered for the national observance of the 15<sup>th</sup> World TB Day (March 24) in Dabou, under the theme "On the Move Against TB: Let's Innovate to Act More Quickly." In a speech, CDC Country Director Dr. Anna Likos noted the progress of the National TB Program, which as of 2009 had integrated TB/HIV co-infection services at 93 TB diagnostic and care centers and tested more than 70% of TB patients for HIV. With PEPFAR support, seven TB centers were renovated last year, and three Abidjan laboratories (Institut Pasteur, CeDReS, and CAT Adjame) were strengthened with cutting-edge diagnostic tools and infrastructure upgrades to allow faster and more reliable identification and treatment of TB patients and better testing for drug resistance. Likos pledged PEPFAR's continuing support for the Ministry of Health and the National TB Program. PEPFAR has contributed about \$17 million over five years for TB/HIV activities in Côte d'Ivoire, including \$3.35 million allocated for 2010.

In conjunction with World TB Day, the U.S. government released a new TB strategy describing how it will contribute to TB control efforts as part of the broader Global Health Initiative. The strategy is available at [http://www.usaid.gov/press/releases/2010/USG\\_TB\\_Strategy\\_3-24-10.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/press/releases/2010/USG_TB_Strategy_3-24-10.pdf).

**Focus on MSM:** Formative research is providing insights on men who have sex with men (MSM) in Côte d'Ivoire, a neglected and under-served group considered at high risk of HIV infection.

Interviews and focus groups with 32 MSM and eight health-service providers in Abidjan were conducted last August in preparation for a larger behavioral and biological study in 2010, both with PEPFAR/CDC under the leadership of the Ministry of AIDS, the Ministry of Health, and the MSM Technical Working

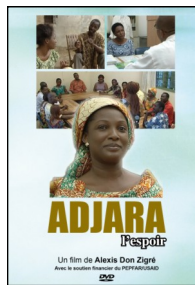
**News in Brief**

Group.

Initial findings suggest that MSM are less hidden and feel less stigmatized than in the past and that they interact in social groups that get together for special occasions (birthdays, marriages, parties) and to provide support in cases of illness or death. Findings suggest that MSM are aware of HIV risks and are in need of health and support services. As a group, MSM participating in the study were single (94%) or divorced and highly educated (53% had completed university); half were unemployed.

Study results are informing the design of a more in-depth study of 600 MSM that will focus on behavioral risks and will include HIV testing.

**Film of hope:** A widowed mother near death, her sister desperately seeking cash for yet another traditional healer, her brother ready to send her to the village to die. That's the scene in *Adjara, l'Espoir (Hope)*, a new film from PEPFAR partner Johns Hopkins University's Center



for Communication Programs (JHU/CCP). Released in March, the film focuses on the intervention of an HIV-positive neighbor and a community counselor, who accompany Adjara for HIV testing and counseling and antiretroviral treatment. The film emphasizes the importance of support (from community counselors, family, and peer support groups), the availability and efficacy of appropriate medical care, and the critical link between health facility and community. *Adjara* is intended for general distribution as well as targeted use in health facilities and with community-based activities.

JHU/CCP is also restarting its media campaign to promote parent-child communication, with billboards and TV ads every night



in April and May. Community-based activities, starting in May, will focus on helping parents and children talk

about sexuality and other sensitive topics.

**OVC quality:** Côte d'Ivoire's National OVC Program (PNOEV) in February launched a quality improvement (QI) process to ensure that services make a meaningful and measurable difference in the lives of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) and their families.

The launch follows elaboration of national service quality standards (2008) and the training of 90 QI "coaches" from social centers, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the PNOEV, and PEPFAR partners working in four pilot sites (San Pedro, Yamoussoukro, Bouaké, and Yopougon).

The pilot phase, supported by PEPFAR and its partner URC, is intended to assess the feasibility and effectiveness of the quality standards and to refine implementation strategies. Community-based organizations have received coaching to help them establish QI teams and define action plans for piloting the quality standards.

**Wives in action:** The Association of Military Wives of Côte d'Ivoire (AEMC) is expanding its activities to promote HIV prevention nationwide. While the uniformed forces benefit from prevention, testing, and care activities by PEPFAR partner PSI, the spouses' association is working with community and youth leaders to develop awareness sessions for children and spouses, strengthen parent-child communication to prevent risky behavior among youth, strengthen psychosocial support for spouses infected or affected by HIV, and promote HIV testing.

**Comings & No Goings**



**Dr. Aka Digbo Micheline**, new biomedical prevention adviser



**Bombo Kouadio Louis Anselme**, new project manager



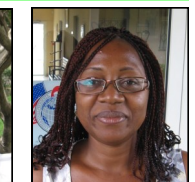
**Konan N'da Marie-Constance**, new project manager



**Zina Hamidou**, new lab technician



**Mourad Mame Linda**, new lab technician



**Traore Korotoumou**, new administrative assistant