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HIV/AIDS SUMMIT GATHERS PRACTITIONERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Gathering provides venue for sharing best practices in global HIV/AIDS effort

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Washington, D.C. – More than 100 practitioners of HIV/AIDS capacity building from more than 20 countries are meeting in Washington D.C. at the National Press Club for a summit to share approaches, successes and challenges in the global effort to combat HIV/AIDS. Pact, a US-based development non-profit, is hosting the event through its Community REACH program on November 17-18. The gathering is one of the largest of its kind, bringing together experts from the government, capacity building institutions, and field implementers from around the world.

“Capacity building is empowering local actors to take the lead in their own development,” said Polly Mott, director of the Community REACH program. “It has become a critical function of the global response to HIV/AIDS and is essential at the national, local and community levels. In the HIV/AIDS sector, building skills and knowledge at the local level has been critical in allowing national and global responses to match the scale needed for such a pervasive issue as HIV/AIDS. This summit is a tremendous opportunity for these practitioners to share and grow to improve their service delivery around the world.”

Community REACH is an eight-year global USAID program funded through the Global Bureau for Health’s Office of HIV/AIDS – through the generous support of the American people. The program facilitates the rapid award of grant funds to organizations to increase access to services those most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infection. Since 2001, the Community REACH programs have awarded over 400 grants to partners combating HIV/AIDS across the world. As a result of our partnerships, more than six million individuals have received prevention services, eight million condoms have been distributed, approximately 800,000 people living with HIV/AIDS and vulnerable children have benefited from care and support. A quarter million people received HIV counseling and testing and more than 60,000 people living with HIV/AIDS began anti-retroviral therapy.

“From my experience, for HIV/AIDS capacity building programs to be successful, they have to start at community level. Once the capacity of community groups have been strengthened to identify their own HIV/AIDS problems and how to address them, they have to be supported to build and or strengthen their relationships with primary health care programs in their settings,” said Yvonne Mulenga, an implementer of HIV/AIDS programming in Zambia and former Pact grant recipient. “And ‘capacity building’ does not end there. Emphasis should be placed on building skills in resource mobilization skills and income generation activities identified by communities themselves so that they are able to care for their own caregivers.”

Summit participants will focus on reaching a consensus on the future direction of capacity building for HIV/AIDS programs and the best approaches to scale-up what works. Participants will include not only leading US-based HIV/AIDS capacity building institutions but also experts from local organizations in 11 African, five Asian and two Latin American countries.

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Pact's mission is to build empowered communities, effective governments and responsible private institutions that give people an opportunity for a better life. With offices in 24 countries and programs in more than 59, Pact has nearly 40 years experience in global development. Find out more about Pact at www.pactworld.org

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