

Written by Stephen Felix

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People living with HIV and Aids or PLWHAs will have further opportunities to inform programmes undertaken through the work of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States OECS HIV/AIDS Project Unit (HAPU) in helping Member States to deal with the deadly virus..

This is among the outcomes of a just ended regional meeting which reviewed the status or programme under a Global Fund grant to treat people PLWHA's in the OECS.

Leo Casimir, Programme Officer at the OECS HIV/AIDS Project Unit, says the just ended review of the Global Fund grant recommended a series of opportunities for PLWHA's to inform how to further scale up the prevention, care and treatment to combat the spread of HIV and AIDS in the OECS: "People living with HIV/AIDS need to be assured that there is going to be continuity of services. They need to know that the programmes are always being implemented with them in mind. PLWHAs will be more and more involved in the process as we move towards a new round. We are now working on the new proposal and setting up country coordinating mechanisms. PLWHAs as part of civil society will form part of the country coordinating mechanisms that will oversee what is happening in Member States who will then report to the regional coordinating mechanism. PLWHAs will be involved in all aspects of any programme that is to continue, throughout the planning and implementation. We need to increase the level of representation by PLWHAs on the various bodies and we are hoping that PLWHAs will form an integral part of the new proposal we are going to develop."

Casimir says PLWHAs will also play a meaningful role in the transitional phases between the current OECS Global Fund programme which concludes in August 2010 and the pending PANCAP Global Fund grant scheduled for implementation in January of 2011: "PLWHAs will benefit from the activities that are ongoing until August because they are part of the ongoing country work-plan. For example, the whole issue of institutional support, assistance for care and support groups will continue until the end of this cycle. We were also able to examine some of the issues pertaining to the end this grant and the beginning of the PANCAP grant in January

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where there is going to be a gap between the closing of one and the beginning of another. A plan has been put in place for that that where PLWHAs will continue to get services towards the end of one and the beginning of another. Many times you will have a lapse where as one project ends another one begins. But we have provided a work-plan that will cover those activities that will embrace the needs of PLWHAs.”



The OECS Secretariat, through its HIV/AIDS Project Unit is the Principal Recipient of a five year grant from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM). The main objective of the OECS Global Fund Project is to ensure access to treatment and care for people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. The Global Fund Project for HIV and AIDS in the OECS which is winding down its fifth year since implementation, has undertaken activities aimed at strengthening the capacity of National AIDS Programmes

This, the first review of the Global Fund grant programme, also discussed current issues related to HIV and AIDS in the OECS sub region. Casimir says the overwhelming turnout by member countries at the review demonstrates the priority countries have given to people in the OECS affected by and infected with HIV and Aids: “The countries are aware of what is going to happen in the region. Hence, when we are developing plans, we will not be duplicating or spending too much time on one matter. We now know what each agency will address and this gives us an idea on addressing gaps in the delivery of services”.- Casimir The OECS HAPU was established in 2005 to coordinate the response to HIV/AIDS within six OECS Member States namely Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Media Contact: Raymond O’Keeffe Email: rokeiffe@oeecs.org Tel. 1-758- 455-6305 or 455-OECS

Subject Contact: Turkessa Antoine Tel. 455-OECS or 452-2537