



**OECS Secretariat, Castries, St. Lucia, Wednesday December 1<sup>st</sup> 2010.** Head of the OECS Secretariat's HIV AIDS Project Unit (OECS HAPU),

Dr. James St. Catherine, says the Unit's service to OECS Member States in tackling HIV and AIDS has yielded successes in many areas. However he adds that there is still significant room for improvement in aspects such as getting people to know their HIV status, treatment compliance, capacity to monitoring the safety and effectiveness of treatment, and the human resource and infrastructural support for dealing with cases of HIV and AIDS.

Dr. St. Catherine states that regarding quality treatment the region is doing far better than expected but it is based largely on the assumption that many more of those who are eligible for treatment are being found. To this end Dr. St. Catherine agrees that finding those who are eligible for treatment is difficult because global programs have fallen short of expectations He says finding persons who don't know they are living with HIV could prove the biggest challenge. In this regard he recommends effective promotion and strategic upgrading of Health facilities infrastructure to provide privacy and most importantly client-sensitive staff to instill confidence in potential users to help attract those who are infected to seek treatment: ***"Before you do an HIV test you really need counseling and if you look at how our health centres are organized it's difficult to have private consultation because one is being asked very intimate questions such as sexual pursuits and behaviours, so one needs to look at redefining the infrastructure. Once you get someone to come to you and they face stigma you lose them if you cannot give them an almost one-stop-shop arrangement where, in one session, you can do all you have to do. Once they have to return then the return rate of persons coming for their test results and follow-up can decrease. Despite all the positives strides we have made we have to look at our own capacity to deliver a more efficient service that can allow persons to have a one-stop-shop arrangement with us."***

## OECS HAPU calls for enhanced strategies to attract persons living with HIV/AIDS for Treatment.

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[rokeiffe@o](#)