

“It’s almost impossible to make people understand what is happening in so many parts of Southern Africa, the ubiquity of death, the pervasiveness of death, you go into the adult medical wards, you have two and three people in a bed; you have someone lying on the concrete floor under the bed; These people are in the anguish finale very often of AIDS related illnesses.”

Stephen Lewis

UN Special Envoy to Africa on HIV/AIDS
From his keynote Address at Southern Illinois University Carbondale November 17, 2004



Participants

Mike Lawrence
Director
Public Policy Institute
Southern Illinois University
Carbondale, IL

Stephen Lewis
UN Special Envoy to Africa
on HIV/AIDS
Ontario, Canada

Edith Ng’oma
Graduate Student in
Rehabilitation Counseling
at Southern Illinois
University Carbondale and
former Red Cross SKP
coordinator and CARE-
SCOPE Regional Supervisor
in Zambia, Africa

Carl Stecker
Senior Program Director for
the AIDS Relief Project
Catholic Relief Services
Baltimore, MD

Kathe Kobacker
HIV/AIDS in Africa
Hospice Volunteer
Columbus, OH

Phyllis Shadwick
Board Member
Global Alliance on AIDS
Chicago, IL

Carla Feldhamer
RN BA Certified Hospice &
Palliative Nurse
Hospice of Southern Illinois
Marion, IL

For more information please contact:

Public Policy Institute
Mail Code 4429
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
1231 Lincoln Drive
Carbondale, Illinois 62901

Phone: (618) 453-4009
Fax: (618) 453-7800
Email: siuppi@siu.edu
Web: www.siu.edu/~ppi

Allida Plumer
RN BSN Certified Hospice
& Palliative Nurse
Hospice of Southern Illinois
Marion, IL

Sam Goldman
Professor Emeritus, Dept. of
Educational Administration
& Higher Education, and
Consultant at Hospice of
Southern Illinois
Carbondale, IL

Saliwe Kawewe
Professor of Social Work
Southern Illinois University
Carbondale, IL

Elaine Jurkowski
Associate Professor of
Social Work
Southern Illinois University
Carbondale, IL

Matt Baughman
Development Director
Public Policy Institute
Southern Illinois University
Carbondale, IL

Peter Sarver
Founding member of the
Foundation for Hospices in
Sub-Saharan Africa
Syracuse, NY

HIV/AIDS in Africa: Engaging America in the Battle



**Working group recommendations
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The following is a plan of action for communities, organizations and individuals interested in forming a partnership in Africa to send human resources, supplies, funding and other support to fight the war on HIV/AIDS.

1 Realize that it all starts with **you**. Learn all you can about the tragedy of HIV/AIDS in Africa and use your education to teach others about this crisis and how it affects not only millions of people in Africa, but our lives in the United States. Find out what, if anything, is already happening in your community to address this crisis.

2 Begin building a team of other concerned citizens in your community from civic groups, faith-based organizations, health care organizations, educational institutions, and other places. Find those who you consider to be leaders of influence and get them excited about joining your team and form a committee or steering board.

3 Identify people in your community whose lives are touched by HIV/AIDS in Africa, including those from Africa who are part of your community. Ask them to join your committee or assist you in personalizing the issue.

4 Develop a vision within your community for what can be done with the skills, talents and abilities that you can bring to the table. Build momentum by seeking opportu-

nities to share your vision with organizations and leaders in your community. Help others understand the moral, social, economic and political aspects of HIV/AIDS in Africa.

5 Identify national or international organizations with strong records of accomplishment in HIV/AIDS in Africa that involve participation from U.S. citizens. Gather information to learn about the various programs and projects already in existence. Look for an organization that closely matches your community's strengths and contact it to learn more.

6 Continue to spend a significant amount of time in strategic planning to identify community resources and partners that will work with you to support your efforts. Set specific goals and objectives and ask your committee and others to help you meet them.

7 Form a fundraising committee to solicit individuals, businesses, faith-based organizations and foundations in your community to help support the partnerships.

8 Form a public relations committee that will help bring a wider awareness of your group's efforts to your community and its leaders.

9 After careful consideration, choose a non-governmental organization (NGO) that your committee can formally partner with in planning an overseas trip for members of your group. For example, the goal of the Foundation for Hospices in Sub Saharan Africa (fhssa.org) is to establish

long-term relationships with U.S. and African communities through local Hospice programs. Regardless of your partnering agency, pay special attention to matching your strengths with a community's needs.

10 Set reasonable and manageable goals such as to send just one or two members of your group on the initial trip to Africa within the first 12 to 18 months. Work on establishing strong ties with your NGO and with your partners in Africa.

11 Do not rely on intermittent trips to Africa to build a long-term relationship with your partners overseas. Find other ways to be helpful to your African partners such as sending supplies, funding or other resources to them before and after your trips. Keep the channels of communication open by sending letters or emails.

12 Assure that all volunteers traveling overseas are sensitized to local cultures, customs, languages, etc. so that volunteers can more quickly feel comfortable in their temporary surroundings and strong ties can be developed between the volunteers and the African people. Prepare volunteers for the devastation HIV/AIDS has caused in Africa.

13 Traveling overseas allows you to experience the devastation of HIV/AIDS, rather than simply imagining it. It builds compassion and provides a deeper understanding of the pandemic.

14 Share the experiences with others through continued educational opportunities in your community. Use photographs, stories, videos and other tools to help motivate others to support your cause.

15 Bring representatives from your African partnership to your community to help put a face on those your group is working with and serving overseas. Allow your guests the opportunity to meet those who are supporting your efforts and to share how the support makes a difference to the lives of people in Africa.

16 Do not give up. The HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa can be overwhelming. Know that for each individual and community that becomes involved in the fight, the more hopeful we can all be that many lives are being touched for the better.



(left to right)Kathe Kobacker of Columbus, Ohio; Peter Sarver of Syracuse, New York; Edith Ng'oma of Zambia, Africa; and Carl Stecker of Baltimore, Maryland served as the symposium panelists presenting varying perspectives on the issue of U.S. involvement in HIV/AIDS in Africa.