

path Today

Program for Appropriate Technology in Health

A Newsletter for Friends and Supporters of PATH Winter 2002

“BEHAVIOR CHANGE COMMUNICATION”

A Leader in the Field of BCC, PATH Has People Talking

In an open air market on the outskirts of Nairobi, a PATH facilitator has temporarily halted a street theater act about a young couple's relationship. The young man in the drama has been engaging in behavior that puts him and his girlfriend at risk for HIV. She knows this, yet tolerates his behavior in part because of cultural and gender norms; her loyalty is tested. The facilitator asks the audience, “Should she have sex with this man?” The question elicits jeers and opinions from the crowd; their response directs how the play will unfold.

Welcome to Magnet Theater, a unique and powerful method for fostering community dialogue about the behaviors and social norms that contribute to the spread

of HIV in Kenya. An estimated 13.5 percent of Kenyans aged 15 to 49 are HIV positive.

Magnet Theater, so named because audiences are “pulled” to weekly performances at fixed locations, is gaining wide popularity through the efforts of PATH's several regional theater coordinators working across Kenya. The theater activities are designed not just to entertain and educate, but also to encourage audience participation and reflection that are key to sustained behavior change.

A basic tenet of behavior change communication, or BCC, is that information alone often is not enough to alter a person's behavior. Through dialogue,

questioning, and reflection, individuals “own” the information—and act on it. Magnet Theater is one part of a four-part BCC intervention in Kenya that also includes a radio soap opera, talk show, and peer education program. Each component shapes and informs the other three. Magnet Theater scripts reflect the real-life dilemmas



Liz Gilbert

Continued inside

From the President

We like to share news about grants awarded to PATH, and this issue of *PATH Today* offers plenty of good news.

We're happy that PATH continues to garner project support from foundations and the U.S. government. However, the flexible support we get from individual donors is just as vital.



Dr. Christopher J. Elias

Individuals provide "seed money" for PATH to germinate new ideas, gather research, form partnerships, and conduct pilot projects to demonstrate new approaches—essential work that often leads to major funding from donor agencies.

One example is PATH's work in emergency contraception. With modest seed funding several years ago, we began model projects and gained experience that led to the Compton Foundation's award reported in this issue.

Individual donors also provide a margin for excellence. A case in point is our work on barrier methods described on page 4. Individuals have supported field research essential to PATH's user-focused product development methodology. The EMPOWER program builds on this high standard.

To all our individual donors, we say a heartfelt "thanks." We take special pleasure in sharing our good news with you.

Best wishes for the new year.

Christopher J. Elias, M.D., M.P.H.
President

BEHAVIOR *from front page*

shared in peer education groups, which in turn may use the latest soap opera episode to start a discussion. A number of Magnet Theater attendees have been inspired to seek HIV testing, and several of them have told their stories on the radio talk show.

PATH is a leader and innovator in the field of BCC, as demonstrated not only in Kenya but also in projects from China to Latin America. Using street theater, community mural painting, peer education, games, comics, the Internet, radio, and other media and methods, PATH provides information—and provokes discussion—on topics ranging from HIV prevention to adolescent sexual and reproductive health to tuberculosis.

The importance of BCC to PATH's global mission of improving health was apparent when 55 PATH staff members, representing all of our sites worldwide, participated in a four-day BCC workshop at the Mt. Kenya Safari Club, outside of Nairobi, in October. The purpose of the meeting was to share experiences, methods, and skills across PATH programs. We recognize that cultures are diverse and call for customized approaches. We also know that evaluation is key to understanding



Getting people to talk is a key

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PATH'S
is to improve health, especially the health of women and children. PATH identifies, particularly in low-resource settings. PATH shares knowledge, skills, and technologies with



...step toward changing behaviors and social norms.

works and assessing the impact of our
s.

our days of non-stop exchanges at the
Mt. Kenya—and a special performance of
Theater—inspired and invigorated PATH
continue the creative BCC work that has
dy talking!

*PATH publication features games that
adapted for use by groups working
in diverse settings to encourage
and discussion around sexuality and
ive health.*

*create safe spaces for people—especially
to talk about sensitive topics."*

Anne Wilson
PATH Strategic Program Leader
HIV and AIDS and TB

Making a Difference

New funding for emergency contraception... The Compton Foundation has awarded PATH a two-year, \$150,000 grant to support activities aimed at increasing the awareness, availability, and use of emergency contraception in developing countries in order to reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies and abortions. The project will educate decision makers in ministries of health and international organizations about emergency contraception and provide them with information and tools to integrate emergency contraception services into health service delivery systems.

Continued support for HIV prevention... PATH has secured a \$390,000 cost extension from the United States Agency for International Development for the national AIDS Surveillance and Education Project (ASEP) in the Philippines. PATH implements the educational component of ASEP, which includes community outreach, peer education, and mass media interventions targeted at preventing the spread of HIV infection among high-risk groups and the general public. The extension will allow PATH to continue activities on this innovative project until September 2003.

PATH's Loan Fund gets additional capital... The Calvert Social Investment Foundation has made a \$300,000 Program Related Investment in PATH's Loan Fund, which has served as an affordable source of loan financing for over 70 health projects in 19 countries. The Loan Fund aims to reduce the cost, improve the quality, or increase the availability of health products or services in developing countries by providing financial, technical, and other assistance to sustainable private-sector enterprises.

New offices in Nicaragua and China... Nicaragua is the latest country to host a PATH office. Located in Managua, the office houses PATH's Entre Amigas project aimed at improving the health of young adolescents. PATH has worked in Nicaragua for two years on emergency contraception and gender-based violence projects. China is slated for a PATH office in early 2003. The opening of an office in Beijing caps more than 20 years of PATH involvement in various family planning and health projects in China. In both countries, the presence of a PATH office will strengthen relationships with local authorities and partner organizations and support programmatic expansion. With these two newest sites, PATH now has offices in 14 countries around the world.

Our mission

*develops, and applies appropriate and innovative solutions to public health problems,
governmental and nongovernmental partners in developing countries and with groups in need.*

— Technology Solutions —

Women's Needs Spur "Diaphragm Renaissance"

The potential of the diaphragm to prevent sexually transmitted disease (STD) and HIV infection in women brought leading researchers, advocates, and regulators from around the world to Seattle recently for a "Diaphragm Renaissance" meeting at PATH.

The need for female-controlled methods of protection has been recognized for many years.

While condoms are effective in preventing the spread of STDs and HIV, in many parts of the world, women find it difficult to negotiate condom use. Recently, women's health advocates have called for greater attention to be focused on using methods such as the diaphragm and other cervical barriers to prevent the spread of infection.

The "Diaphragm Renaissance" meeting was co-hosted by PATH's EMPOWER program, the AIDS Research Institute at the University of California San Francisco, and Ibis Reproductive Health. The two-day meeting provided a forum for participants to prioritize research, advocacy, and policy steps to increase the role of the diaphragm in international reproductive health and family planning programs.



PATH conducts field research in order to design products that meet the needs of potential users in diverse settings.

PATH has been active in the development of various barrier methods for women for nearly a decade. In early 2002, a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation launched EMPOWER, a five-year program that focuses on female-initiated technologies, including cervical or intravaginal barriers, female condoms, and topical microbicides, that can help women protect themselves against disease and unwanted pregnancy.

Specific goals of the EMPOWER program are to:

- **Improve** existing barrier devices by making them easier to use, more comfortable, and less expensive;
 - **Accelerate** the development of new products by assessing existing products, facilitating product formulation, and validating designs through user evaluation; and
 - **Introduce** new technologies by collaborating with partners in developing countries and the private sector.
- Building on PATH's many years of experience in designing products for users in developing countries, the "Diaphragm Renaissance" meeting and EMPOWER program demonstrate PATH's catalytic role in advancing technologies that meet urgent global health needs.



Program for Appropriate Technology in Health

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Christopher J. Elias, M.D., M.P.H.

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