



For Immediate Release
Kingston Jamaica
May 19, 2007

Primary School Students Speak Out Against HIV & AIDS Stigma and Discrimination

- In Scotiabank HIV & AIDS Debating Competition

Students of the Hydel Preparatory in St. Catherine and the Retreat Primary and Junior High School in St. Mary are expected to meet in the grand final of the Scotiabank National Primary Schools HIV and AIDS Debating Competition to discuss the moot *'The school is not a suitable setting for students affected by AIDS'*. The climax of the Debating Competition which will happen on Saturday May 19 at the Chinese Benevolent Association, is expected to attract hundreds of students, teachers, parents and other members of civic society in a day of activities centered around increasing awareness on HIV and AIDS and fighting stigma and discrimination against the disease.

Under the banner, Speak Up! And Speak Out! the students have debated issues of sexuality and HIV and AIDS since the start of the competition on February 26 and have been exposed to an intense period of research, education and training about the issues involving children and HIV and AIDS. This has also seen them interfacing directly with persons living with the disease through seminars and presentations. The competition has also targeted parents, teachers and members of the external community through a number of seminars and road shows. The outreach activities were aimed at increasing each group's awareness levels about the disease and encouraging them to discuss the issues of sexuality with children and adolescents in their care.

Scotiabank launched the competition in December 2006 to raise awareness levels among young children and change attitudes towards persons living with the disease, by fighting stigma and discrimination while promoting healthy lifestyles. Over 285 schools registered for the competition, and received resource material to assist in their HIV and AIDS education.

In addition to hosting the finals of the competition on Saturdaym the Bank has invited several local agencies and individuals instrumental in the fight against HIV to stage an exhibition. These include the Ministries of Health and Education, the Jamaica Business Council on HIV and AIDS, UNICEF, the Jamaica AIDS Support and other government and non-governmental agencies.

Scotiabank has openly expressed its commitment to leading the fight against HIV and AIDS internationally. Regionally, Jamaica has led the mission through innovative interactions among staff and in the community. Mr. William Clarke, President & CEO noted that “As a corporate leader in the corporate financial sector, Scotiabank has a keen awareness of our responsibility in heading the mission to spread awareness and change behaviours among Jamaicans. Currently, the spread of HIV and AIDS is having a tremendous effect on our financial and human resources. This is our contribution to the safety of the next generation.” He further explained that the Bank has made an effort to reach staff, other persons of working age and the future generation.”

The Competition has received international recognition and support from the Global Business Coalition (GBC) on HIV and AIDS headquartered in New York. Executive Director of the Coalition, Dr. John Tedstrom, said that, “Awareness and prevention campaigns are clearly a crucial component of the global effort to stem the spread of HIV/AIDS. GBC applauds Scotiabank for sponsoring this fun and effective event, which will provide thousands of students with the critical knowledge and skills needed to avoid infection.” He also added that the Competition will also will reduce discrimination and convey the importance of treating people living with AIDS with love and compassion. This is a perfect demonstration of private sector involvement in supporting the health and vitality of the communities in which they do business.

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