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Caribbean Broadcasters Launch Campaign of “Heroes” Who LIVE UP in Response to HIV/AIDS

Media Executives Convene in Cuba, Reaffirm Commitment to Regionwide Response to AIDS

26 August 2008, HAVANA – The Caribbean Broadcast Media Partnership on HIV/AIDS (CBMP), a coalition of media from across the Caribbean, today announced a new series of public service ads (PSAs) and special programming as part of LIVE UP, its ongoing HIV/AIDS public information campaign. Featuring everyday real-life “heroes” making a real difference in response to HIV/AIDS, the new programming will share the personal stories of men and women from across the Caribbean doing their part to stem the spread of the disease. The LIVE UP “Heroes” programming content will debut in September across the CBMP’s 83member broadcasters in 25 Caribbean countries and territories.

“We are really pleased with the launch of the Heroes Campaign. This concept underscores the important message that we can all be actively involved in the response to HIV/AIDS in the region even in our daily lives. A campaign such as this emphasizes that we can all be heroes by taking action in our lives to help stem the spread of this virus”, said Dr. David McBean, CBMP Steering Committee Chair and President of the CVM Communications Group.

The announcement came in conjunction with the 2nd Annual CBMP Executive Meeting, where media leaders from around the region discussed opportunities for new regional initiatives to address the HIV/AIDS crisis. Among the achievements over the past year, noted by Dr. Allyson Leacock, Executive Director of the CBMP, at the meeting:

- Development and regional distribution of LIVE UP public service ads (PSAs) across over 80 broadcast companies in 25 Caribbean countries and territories;
- Debut of *LIVE UP: The Show*, the CBMP’s monthly television newsmagazine program, co-produced with the Caribbean Media Corporation and comprised of segments produced by CBMP members;
- Expansion of LIVE UP free information resources, including a regional SMS initiative with Digicel that fielded over 30,000 text messages from customers requesting information about local HIV/AIDS resources;
- Specialized briefings and training sessions for journalists, editors, and producers of popular programming;
- Small production awards to support the creation of local HIV/AIDS-themed programming and build capacity among Caribbean media;
- Expanded news and public affairs programming, including live coverage from Mexico City of the XVII International AIDS Conference;
- Significant expansion into Haiti, with locally-relevant Creole-language programming and materials airing across 17 Haitian television and radio broadcasters.

“The CBMP has made significant strides in its goals and objectives and this is evident in both the amount and quality of programming and training they have been able to produce as well as their success in expanding the membership while building partnerships with regional and international organisations. That they were able to accomplish this in just two years bodes well for the region’s response in relation to

HIV/AIDS issues” said, Sir George Alleyne, UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean and Chairman of the CBMP Board of Trustees.

Ensuring that the CBMP continues to have the necessary resources, the Ford Foundation and Elton John AIDS Foundation also announced today that they have renewed financial support for the coming year, and the Kaiser Family Foundation will continue to provide strategic and production support to the Partnership.

“Sustainability is key to the CBMP being able to achieve its long term objectives to help stem the spread of HIV/AIDS and make a real difference in the region. We have managed to almost triple our membership in just two years, and we are seeing levels of commitment from our members that indicate we are certainly on the right track with our campaign. I believe that with the continued support of our partners and the commitment of our members, we are poised to have a remarkable impact in the region’s response to HIV/AIDS” said CBMP Executive Director, Dr. Allyson Leacock.

As part of an ongoing effort to ensure the CBMP activities are meeting the needs of its members and that programming, PSAs and other information are being aired, the CBMP surveyed 42 of its members from May 19-June 13, 2008. The findings revealed strong impact:

- 69% of respondents have increased resources and airtime devoted to HIV/AIDS as a result of the CBMP’s efforts;
- Over 70% of respondents report producing original HIV/AIDS public affairs programming content throughout the year; 55% produced original entertainment programming with HIV/AIDS themes;
- 67% of respondents have worked with their National AIDS Commission or other government agency over the past year on HIV-related programming; 43% have coordinated with other HIV/AIDS organizations.

Heroes “LIVING UP” in Response to AIDS in the Caribbean

The LIVE UP “Heroes” campaign includes over 20 original television and radio public service ads (PSAs), new online content at www.iliveup.com and complementary programming from *LIVE UP: The Show* – the CBMP’s monthly television newsmagazine. This unique initiative uses first-person testimonials from everyday individuals to inspire young people across the Caribbean to take action in response to HIV/AIDS.

Heroes featured in the campaign include:

- **Wendy Fitzwilliam** (*Trinidad*): Miss Universe 1998, UNAIDS Goodwill Ambassador, and Founder of The Hibiscus Foundation
- **Allison Hinds** (*Barbados*): mother, SOCA queen, and HIV/AIDS educator
- **Keith Kemp** (*Bahamas*): peer educator, HIV counselor, and Youth Ambassador for Positive Living
- **Corey Lane** (*Barbados*): youth organizer, community mentor, television host
- **Shana Maruis** (*St. Lucia*): friend, listener, youth HIV educator
- **Kerrell McKay** (*Jamaica*): daughter, caretaker, HIV outreach worker
- **Luke Sinnette** (*Trinidad*): educator, advocate, President of “Friends for Life”

Detailed information about each of the Heroes is available on the campaign’s website (www.iliveup.com), where visitors can nominate a “hero” or share stories and positive examples of “living up” in response to AIDS. The site also includes comprehensive information about HIV prevention and testing, as well as links to local AIDS resources in each country.

ABOUT HIV/AIDS IN THE CARIBBEAN

HIV/AIDS represents a formidable economic and social challenge in the Caribbean. According to the Joint United National Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Caribbean has the second highest

prevalence rate in the world, after sub-Saharan Africa. AIDS is the leading cause of death among adults in the region aged 15-44 and the epidemic is increasingly female with new HIV infections among women exceeding those among men in the Caribbean. Young women are especially vulnerable, as some country-level studies within the region have found infection rates among young women 2 to 6 times higher than their male counterparts. For more information about HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean, visit www.globalhealthfacts.org.

ABOUT THE CBMP

Created in 2006, the Caribbean Broadcast Media Partnership on HIV/AIDS (CBMP) unites 83 top broadcasters from 25 countries in the region's first coordinated media response to the pandemic. The Partnership creates a structured framework for sharing information and resources among broadcasters that significantly expands HIV/AIDS-related programming and public education activities across the Caribbean. Member broadcasters deliver HIV/AIDS information across a variety of platforms and formats, including targeted public service announcements (PSAs), entertainment programming, news and public affairs programming, and online resources. In 2007, the CBMP launched **LIVE UP** – the Caribbean's first media-led regional initiative that links people together with one message of hope and possibility and inspires everyone to consider what is within their power to stem the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The CBMP is overseen by a Steering Committee of broadcast executives representing a diverse constituency of media houses and countries from the region, and operates from a regional headquarters office in Barbados. The CBMP receives technical guidance and production support from the Kaiser Family Foundation. The Ford Foundation and the Elton John AIDS Foundation provide additional financial support to underwrite production of campaign materials and informational resources.

For more information, visit <http://www.cbmphiv.org>