

## Partnership Helps Community Journalists in Zambia Bolster HIV/AIDS Reporting Skills

Like journalists the world over — particularly in Africa, where HIV/AIDS has been a story for the past 25 years — reporters in Zambia constantly grapple with ways to find fresh ways of covering the epidemic that represents one of the biggest challenges to the continent's development.

Coming up with new approaches to reporting on AIDS is just one of the many challenges journalists in Zambia face, not the least of which are media fatigue, reliable access to reputable sources, and professional training and development opportunities.

"There was a lot I did not know about quality radio production and how to come up with new approaches to HIV and other types of health reporting," says George Lwanja of Radio Breeze in Chipata, located in Zambia's Eastern Province.

With support from PEPFAR through USAID/Zambia, an HIV/AIDS Twinning Center partnership is working to arm mass media professionals with the knowledge and skills they need to more effectively report on the AIDS epidemic and put timely, accurate information into the hands of the people who need it most.

The Zambia Institute of Mass Communication Educational Trust (ZAMCOM) is working with the University of Kentucky School of Journalism and Telecommunications in Lexington to give journalists and editors a better understanding of HIV-related issues as a way to foster community mobilization for prevention, care, treatment, and stigma reduction.

The main objective of the partnership is to strengthen ZAMCOM's management, administrative, technical, and institutional capacity to organize and conduct media trainings.

In January 2009, partners piloted a community radio workshop on HIV/AIDS reporting for 18 community radio producers and correspondents from Chipata and surrounding towns, including Radio Breeze's George Lwanja.



Community radio personnel from Chipata, Zambia, at the January training on HIV/AIDS reporting. From left to right: Lucas Mwale, Melvin Coffee (University of Kentucky), Cecilia Phiri, and William Mchotsa.



Mia Frederick (right), a radio producer at Appalshop's WMMT FM in Whitesburg, Kentucky, coaches a workshop participant during a practical session. Appalshop is a media collective that documents and preserves Appalachian culture and heritage, while at the same time working to improve quality of life within the community.



Workshop participants interview an individual who provides care and support to PLWH during a hands-on session designed to sharpen their interviewing skills.

The workshop was facilitated jointly by partners from ZAMCOM and the University of Kentucky. Participants received radio recorders, rechargeable batteries, and chargers with accessories to assist in their work.

"The skills and training we received from the University of Kentucky and ZAMCOM, together with the digital recorders they provided each of us, will change our entire approach to community radio journalism," Lwanja admits.



Partners deliver a digital recorder to a participant during the workshop. All of the community journalists who attended the training were provided with recorders, as well as rechargeable batteries and chargers to facilitate their reporting on HIV/AIDS upon their return home.

The training model used in Chipata will be replicated in other areas of Zambia during the second year of the partnership — a process that is expected to stimulate more positive coverage of HIV/AIDS at the community level because of its strong emphasis on community engagement and participation in reporting.