



Rooftops Canada
Abri International



World AIDS Day 2012 –Housing recognized as an HIV/AIDS Intervention By Rooftops Canada/Abri International

A major breakthrough occurred at the July 2012 International Leadership Summit on HIV/AIDS and Housing in Washington DC. The Summit was convened by Rooftops Canada's partners – the U.S. National AIDS Housing Coalition (NAHC) and the Ontario HIV Treatment Network (OHTN) as an affiliated independent event of the AIDS 2012 International Conference. Leaders from UNAIDS and other major institutions agreed on the need to place housing security on the global agenda to end AIDS. Rooftops Canada and its partners have long been advocating the recognition of decent and affordable housing as a major factor in HIV prevention and treatment.



UNAIDS Executive Director, Mr. Michel Sidibé shares a moment with Rooftops Canada's Kamba Ankunda

Addressing the Summit, Michel Sidibé UNAIDS Executive Director said: *"Getting to zero" HIV infections and deaths will require action to address homelessness and housing insecurity among people living with HIV (PLHIV).*" He pointed to strong research evidence that shows housing security improves HIV treatment compliance, reduces mortality and can help lower the risk of HIV transmission. He indicated UNAIDS is advocating for responses to the social determinants that put individuals at risk of acquiring HIV and AIDS. These include poverty, gender inequity and violence, homophobia, poor housing and homelessness.

UNAIDS Deputy ED, Dr. Paul De Lay, spoke of growing awareness of the HIV impact on housing instability in every region, from denial of women's property rights in parts of Africa to high rates of HIV among homeless youth in Eastern Europe. He noted that although awareness was fine, action was critical.

Canada's Stephen Lewis (*pictured on the right*) encouraged participants to *"make housing known as a major HIV and AIDS intervention by getting housing and HIV on the G8 agenda meeting next year; and, advocating for housing as a human right and getting governments that are signatories to the Human Rights charters to be assessed on progress using housing as a variable"*.



These very exciting developments are encouraging North American and global networks to keep pushing for housing linked responses to HIV and AIDS. Representatives from our partners ZINAHCO, in Zimbabwe and MES in South Africa also attended the Leadership summit and the

AIDS Conference. This helped build the African regional network that is sharing knowledge and experience in HIV, AIDS and housing.

Rooftops Canada continues to support the mainstreaming of HIV and AIDS responses among our African partner housing organizations. They are working at both the grassroots level to and working with coalitions to ensure that housing is recognized as an HIV and AIDS intervention in their respective countries.

- The Zimbabwe National Association of Housing Cooperatives is providing gender and HIV/AIDS training for its members. Some of the issues discussed include inheritance and greater involvement of youth, women, PLHIV and those with disabilities in co-op management.
- WAT-Human Settlements Trust in Tanzania has just finalized an HIV policy which will strengthen the mainstreaming of HIV responses. WAT already provides some education and life insurance for its housing microfinance loans.



Housing co-operative members at a housing and HIV/AIDS sensitization workshop in Kenya

- The National Cooperative Housing Union of Kenya is running housing, HIV and AIDS sensitization workshops and counselling programs for housing co-ops including one started by commercial sex workers. It is a “Build and Live” curriculum which supports Housing responses among HIV/AIDS infected youth and women in PHCs. The curriculum was finalised with assistance from a Rooftops Canada technical advisor.

- MES/MHA, a social service and housing agency in central Johannesburg, continues to deliver community support programs and to encourage positive living

among PLHIV through home based care, health education, HIV wellness and hospice/palliative care.

- In Cameroon, CONGEH, a network of NGOs and community organizations, now has a policy document in place to guide the involvement of PLHIV in its activities. CONGEH provides training on gender, AIDS and habitat issues to the community organizations which are actively building awareness through kiosks or information tables set up at busy places in local communities. CONGEH is also very active in promoting awareness among AIDS organizations and relevant government departments.

Rooftops Canada remains active globally and is helping to plan first global research summit on HIV and housing in Montreal Canada in September 2013. We welcome the opportunity to network and build strategic alliances that promote decent housing as a response to HIV. For more information, please contact us.