

Let me congratulate the Kaiser Family Foundation on this initiative in the Caribbean providing an opportunity for Caribbean broadcast media leaders to be part of an HIV/AIDS media initiative in much the same way as their colleagues in India, Russia, Eurasia and most recently South Africa have been able to participate.

India and Russia are second wave countries with burgeoning epidemics. Eurasia includes many similar countries and South Africa is of course one of the countries with the highest disease burden globally.

The Caribbean with its plethora of small island states, mainland countries and dependent territories is classified primarily as a middle income region and therefore I see the selection of this Region as recognition by Kaiser Family Foundation of the vulnerability of middle - income countries regardless of their size or economic classification and I want to thank Dr. Drew Altman and this Foundation for this signal recognition.

I should also like to recognize the support and leadership of Mr. Patrick Cozier of the Caribbean Broadcast Union and Dr. Allyson Leacock of the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation in influencing the content and logistics of this meeting.

On a personal note, let me apologize for being the person who stands between you and a lunch on the terrace but I appreciate the organizers agreeing to a compromise which would provide slightly less of a challenge for me, in order to engage you for a few minutes in more serious reflection. We now have a lunch venue which still allows for you to enjoy looking at the beautiful Barbados Hilton beach while allowing me not to have to compete with the audio-visual distractions outdoors.

This is the second media conference being held in Barbados in two weeks. Last week, in a media conference hosted by UNESCO, the President of the Caribbean Broadcasting Union, Mr. Vic Fernandes, in his address to media practitioners spoke of "the Caribbean grappling with the reality of its regional destiny".

I trust that this conference will enable you to explore and define more fully this "regional destiny", particularly within a landscape of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS.

The Director of Youth Affairs in Barbados, Mr Richard Carter, in a 2003-2004 secondary school behavioral science survey identified some remarkable facts in relation to sexual issues, a few of which I will share with you in an effort to illustrate the reality of dealing with sexuality and the many issues of HIV/AIDS.

Of the 1500 secondary school students surveyed:

- 89.4% felt it was ok for a boyfriend to force his girlfriend to have sex,
- 43.3% agreed that a girl who refuses to have sex would probably lose her boyfriend, and
- 36.8% felt that a steady partner would think they had sex with someone else if they insisted on condom use.

In Barbados, AIDS is by far the leading cause of death in the 15 – 29 years age group, in fact more than six times the number of all the other causes of death in this age group. Similar statistics are repeated across the Caribbean.

The 15 -29 years age group represents 21.6 percent of our total population and a group that are highly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. Media practitioners as valued and proactive partners in AIDS programs at the country level may reasonably be expected to lead the way in encouraging sectors at risk to come forward for voluntary counseling and testing - providing information on the sites but also allaying the fears and providing information and education in this area, as well as publicizing and sometimes underwriting the costs of these Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) campaigns.

Despite our promotion of VCT events in Barbados, we are still only testing approximately ten percent of our population. One of our more urgent goals is to increase the number of people coming forward for VOLUNTARY testing. Today's site visit is designed to allow you to be active partners in the HIV/AIDS program following the example set by Starcom Network and the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation in providing free advertising and live coverage of this event throughout the day.

In Barbados, as in some of the other Caribbean islands, our current AIDS statistics indicate that our 15 to 24 young women are extraordinarily vulnerable, with infection rates of three times their male cohorts in that age group. Whether or not this is skewed by the fact that this is the age bracket where larger numbers of young females are being tested in ante-natal clinics, I believe that this statistic demands attention.

The ability to budget for and then design, implement and evaluate targeted female campaigns, as well as targeting the males with whom they are sexually active requires attitudinal change in policy makers, as well as across both the public and private sector among those who would create, promote or even fund the campaigns.

In small communities such as those we live in across the Caribbean region, the need to create a level of both education and tolerance within the society in general is critical. Effective targeted campaigns may often be offensive to those

outside of the group being targeted and a basic acceptance of that fact is required if the campaigns are to achieve the desired outcomes.

Our target groups are wide and varied - the young men who may themselves be 15 and 16 years old, men of any age who may have multi- partners, young married men or old married men, men who frequent prostitutes, men who are sleeping with men, drug abusers, prisoners, older men in their fifties and sixties, bisexual men, or even men on the “down-low” who do not consider themselves gay and maintain marriages or “stable relationships” with women - each of these groups with their individual idiosyncrasies, could and should be considered as discrete vulnerable groups.

The campaign that targets the young man in the fifth or sixth form at school, Community College or the Polytechnic may not reach the young man at UWI and certainly won't reach the boys on the block or the mini-van driver, nor the middle-aged professional, the business man or artisan, or even the bisexual male of any age and may re-enforce the belief that HIV/AIDS is not relevant to them.

Each of these vulnerable groups are exposed to and influenced by the broadcast media which YOU represent.

The need for behavior change is around us everywhere and it is for the discerning media practitioner to reflect on the information which surveys provide and determine how he or she can influence change in a dynamic and evolving culture. Media practitioners such as yourselves must be seen as agents of change.

Behavior change must be viewed in the context of our cultural landscape which includes our deeply ingrained attitudes towards sex, sexuality and multi-partnering.

Culture is indeed dynamic but it must, therefore, of necessity be bi-directional in flow. In the same way that our culture is shaped by external variables, it must also be influenced by its well-grounded regional roots. Your challenge is to determine how as senior leaders in the fraternity of broadcast media, you can most effectively exert this influence.

In a changing world of information, education and communication, behavior change communication is a relatively new and exciting science which should guide us through targeted research to an outcome which empowers countries and communities to respond to shifting cultural dynamics.

Forty million tourists travel within the Caribbean Region every year, and of course that will be significantly increased in 2007 with the advent of Cricket World Cup. Our region has high levels of extra- and intra-regional travel and therefore none of our borders can ever be sanitized. The problem of any one of

our neighbors becomes a common challenge, particularly in the area of sex and sexuality and in the context of sexually transmitted infections.

Sexually transmitted infections will not go away because we are hosting a major sporting event. To the contrary, the risk of rapid incubation is real unless we as a region take a responsible attitude to the issues involved, whether that means simply not taking offence once the sensitization to HIV/AIDS and other STIs is stepped up, or promoting the increased awareness of public safety and high-risk situations or even the acceptance of the fact that there will have to be a significant increase in condom utilization, sales, and social marketing.

These are public health issues and the media must take ownership for the responsibility of sensitizing people to these public health challenges which have far-reaching developmental consequences. As long as we immerse these issues in a morality debate, we are clouding the issue. There can be no doubt that the moral imperative is that of saving of human lives.

World Cup 2007 presents broadcast media across the Caribbean with a wonderful opportunity to showcase your sensitivity, skills and commitment to disseminating information and educating across your respective countries. Your role as I see it goes further than that, to canvassing Corporate Caribbean to underwrite the costs of these campaigns, of course acknowledging that you may wish to lead with your own contributions in this area – a perfect example of a public-private partnership.

The Global Fund to fight against AIDS Tuberculosis and Malaria is also a public-private partnership committed to stimulating wider engagement of the private sector in areas of health, particularly as it relates to AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

The Global Fund whose Board I joined in 2004, as the Board member for Latin America and the Caribbean, burst on to the scene of developmental financing in 2002 - an innovative financial institution , inspired by the Secretary General of the United Nations, driven initially by the commitment of the G8 countries. This innovation was designed to fundamentally change behavior on the landscape of health financing.

Over four years, the Global Fund has grown exponentially to a budget of US \$ 8Billion for the 2006-2007 biennium. The intention being to attract and disburse unprecedented large sums of money, while ensuring that continued funding is based on grant performance. Over four years it has committed US\$ 4.9Billion to 385 programs in 130 countries and disbursed in excess of two Billion US dollars (US\$ 2Billion) to programs around the world.

Before you leave on your site visits which will include a visit to the Voluntary Counselling and Testing site in Heroe's Square, I would like to reflect with you briefly on stigma and discrimination and the major role of the media in influencing this, particularly as it relates to people living with HIV/AIDS? You have a critical role to play in creating an environment conducive to the acceptance of people living with AIDS both in the workplace and the wider community.

The Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, Sir George Alleyne, himself the U.N Secretary General's Special Envoy on HIV/AIDS for the Caribbean in an interview last year, commented that "we are not genetically programmed to discriminate. Discrimination is a learned behavior."

Media houses can and should take a lead in involving the people living with AIDS in your programs and campaigns. Insist on the adherence to AIDS Workplace policies in your business, ensure regular information flow and public discussion in the workplace on matters related to HIV/AIDS, ensure the employment of PLWA and thereby create and sponsor meaningful interactions which will result in messages which will stimulate thought but more importantly make the connections which will change behavior.

Recently in response to the showing of the movie "Brokeback Mountain" depicting a gay relationship, the President of Taiwan was quoted as saying that the most profound lesson we should take away transcends the narration of love affairs in the movie. "It motivates us instead to understand that all of us are bound to make difficult decisions in life; yet we must strive to dispel prejudice, create trust, uphold mutual respect and seek ways to reconcile and co-operate with one another." What refreshing maturity.

What are the conscious and sub-conscious messages in our communities and who are the connectors who can influence and fashion them?

I ask you as senior media leaders to seek to determine what are the critical pathways to results and the best vehicles through which to stimulate those thoughts and transmit messages.

Producers, writers and performers of music and drama, our artists, song writers, entertainers as well as deejays all create subliminal messages which affect our consciousness.

In a very real way the tipping point in the response to this epidemic in our region may well be determined by the extent of your involvement, your advocacy, editorial licence and commitment to eradicating stigma and discrimination as it relates to HIV/AIDS. It will also be influenced by the effectiveness with which you disseminate information to your listeners designed to stimulate thought and

ultimately catalyze not only access to treatment and care across the region but also accelerate prevention campaigns.

May I respectfully leave with you the suggestion that the creation of regional campaigns in any of these areas, incorporating our incredible diversity and recognizing the influence of our entertainment icons on behavior, would be a positive outcome of this meeting.