

# **AFRICA AIDS WATCH, INC**

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## **MEDIA PRESS RELEASE**

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Subject: **AFRICA AIDS WATCH Appoints New Executive Director**

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Valerie Papaya Mann, a native Washingtonian, has been selected by the Board of Directors of AFRICA AIDS WATCH to head the eight year old, non-profit organization, located in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. For more than 20 years Ms. Mann has been actively involved in the HIV/AIDS movement in the United States. She designed and implemented one of the first comprehensive media outreach campaigns targeting Blacks and other people of color in Washington in 1981. The media pieces are thought to be the first created in the nation focused on this population.

For the past twelve years, Papaya served as the Executive Director of two community-based AIDS Service Organizations. Most recently she directed the D.C. Comprehensive AIDS Resource & Education Consortium (DC CARE Consortium from June 1997-May 2002, and the five years prior to that she was the chief executive officer for the AIDS PROJECT EAST BAY, of Oakland California. Her work includes participation on National Boards of Directors, providing education and training at National Conferences on HIV/AIDS, regularly lobbying on the local, state and national level for more resources for HIV/AIDS prevention, and for services for people living with HIV/AIDS. She has appeared on numerous radio and television talk shows focusing on HIV, as well as serving as a national spokesperson for the disenfranchised. She has provided exceptionally strong leadership in the fight against the spread of HIV in the United States.

From 1994 onwards, Ms. Mann began to apply the skills and experience drawn from her work in the United States to the international fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic. She participated in a fact-finding, and educational trip to Senegal and The Gambia where she met with service providers and provided technical support on how to stop the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS in West Africa. In 1996 and again in 1998 Ms. Mann met with officials from USAID in Ghana to discuss various approaches to delivering HIV prevention and primary care services to diverse ethnic populations.

In December 2001, Ms. Mann conceptualized, organized, recruited and accompanied a medical delegation of 16 American medical and HIV/AIDS professionals to Ghana. The group attracted another 15 Ghanaian providers and Peace Corp volunteers to support their efforts.



Together they held a three-day medical clinic for more than 500 residents from a number of villages in southeastern Ghana, in Akwamu Traditional Area. The group also tested and counseled more than 375 villagers for HIV/AIDS. A second medical group will return in December 2002 to provide follow-up to this prevention intervention and to plan the next stage for providing primary care to those infected with HIV. The University of Houston, Howard University Clinic, and many individual doctors and nurses and others with good will, have joined the planning for the next project. Funding for these interventions are paid for by the participants and raised entirely from private sources.

Because of the massive amount of work and effort made on behalf of the Akwamu people of Ghana, Ms. Mann was honored and enstooled in December 2001; installed as a member of the royal family through a traditional African Ceremony, as a Queen Mother, a chief and elder in the 17 towns and villages that make up Akwamu Traditional Territory. Nana Aku-Brakatu Bremong II, the spokesman and Regional Executive Chief of the Akwamu said in an official document presented to Mann, "Dear Daughter, I, in consultation with the elders, confer on you the prestigious royal title and honored role of 'Nkorsorhemaa' of the Gyaase Palace." The title bestowed on Mann means 'Queen Mother of Development', and honors her for improving the collective health and infrastructure in Ghana.

Godson Offoaro, founder and Board President of AFRICA AIDS WATCH said, "we are very happy to attract Ms. Mann to our agency. One of our goals is to reach Africans living in the district and ministering to them by providing them with prevention information, treatment options and sharing techniques on how to live with HIV/AIDS infection. With Ms Mann coming on board, Africa AIDS Watch services in America and to Africa will be increased manifold. Ms Mann's compassion for humanity and health related works in Africa and the world over more than any other reason was why she was chosen by the Board to assume this enormous task."

"AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa," notes the UN report "is the worst infectious disease catastrophe since the bubonic plague." In a White House publication on the same issue in 1999, a worried writer summarized the impact of AIDS on Africa in these chilling words: "Deaths due to AIDS in the region will soon surpass the 20 million people in Europe who died in the plague of 1347 and the more than 20 million people worldwide who died in the influenza epidemic of 1917. Over the next decade, AIDS will kill more people in sub-Saharan Africa than the total number of casualties lost in all wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century combined." The report concluded by systematically breaking down what havoc AIDS would create in Africa if unchecked.

- "While sub-Saharan Africa accounts for only one-tenth of the global population, it currently carries the burden of more than 80% of AIDS death worldwide.
- In the past decade, 12 million people in sub-Saharan Africa have died of AIDS - one-quarter of them CHILDREN - and each day AIDS buries another 5,500 men women and children

- **In 1988, AIDS was the largest killer and accounted for 1.8 million deaths in sub-Saharan Africa, nearly double the 1 million deaths from malaria and eight times the 209,000 deaths from tuberculosis.**
- **By 2005, the daily death toll will reach 13,000 people with nearly 5 million AIDS deaths in that year alone.**
- **In Sub-Saharan Africa, more than 22 million adults and 1 million children are currently living with HIV. Everyday, 11000 additional people are infected – one every 8 seconds**

**Africa AIDS Watch and Afrilife International have reacted swiftly in many instances by either arranging for direct medical supplies to affected people like we are currently doing with the St. Mary's hospital in the Kwa Zulu Province of South Africa. We also donated drugs and medical supplies to the Police Hospital in Lagos Nigeria and the Save Our Souls Children's Hospital also in Lagos Nigeria. We have recently opened offices in Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Kenya.**

**Africa AIDS Watch, is a US based and registered non-profit organization operating under the IRS 501 © 3 program. The mission is to work in concert with other caring peoples of the world to help Africans and emerging democracies around the world in their daily fight to push back the scourge of the virus that causes HIV and AIDS. We have been in existence since 1994 first operating as Lifeline Africa and then Afrilife International before we settled for Africa AIDS Watch in 1998. Since inception, we have had projects and interventions in the United States, South Africa, Nigeria, Liberia, Kenya, Namibia, and Malawi.**