



AFRICAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

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Spotlight on ASC's Ethiopia Clinics



Co-Executive Director's Recent Trip Highlights Amazing Progress of ASC's Ethiopia Clinics

African Services' co-executive director Kim Nichols recently returned from yet another eventful trip to Ethiopia, where she witnessed first hand all the exciting things she had been hearing about ASC's HIV testing and care clinics. Nichols' visit primarily focused on trips throughout the northern region of the country where ASC's three oldest clinics operate: Addis Ababa's Shola Market, Kombolcha, and Mekele.

"The act of driving from one site to another over such rugged terrain -- roughly 800 km -- was definitely one feature of the trip," Nichols said.

The clinics, though quite a distance apart, have changed and grown through the years in similar ways. Some changes involved making existing programs more efficient, some involved new staff for new initiatives. Many of the staff hired at the onset still work there, providing valuable experience to newer hires. One achievement is the ever-increasing professionalization of the clinics due to the increase in hired health officers.

ASC operates five HIV testing and care clinics in Ethiopia providing free HIV counseling and testing to more than 100,000 people annually through centers at Shola Market in Addis Ababa, Kombolcha, Mekele, Hawassa, and Zeway. Since our inception, we have distributed nearly 3 million free condoms. Together with rapid, free and confidential HIV testing, ASC has made significant strides in normalizing testing and easing the stigma of HIV.



Clients at our Kombolcha clinic.



Sheep-fattening project beneficiary

Helping commercial sex workers (CSWs) -- who are active clients of African Services Committee -- is an area ASC reports significant progress. CSWs are regular clients who come to our clinics for free condoms, to participate in peer support discussions, as well as for care and support services. Since 2013, ASC provided services to a total of 262 new CSWs, in Addis Ababa, 20, Kombolcha, 47, Mekele, 90, and in the other two clinics of Zeway, 38 and Hawassa, 67.

We also recently initiated a sheep fattening, micro-lending project. This empowering program promotes gender equality by allowing women to profit from their sheep. More than one hundred women currently participate in this PEPFAR grant-supported initiative. The selected women received training in the care and importance of vaccinating and providing their new animals with a protein-rich diet. We will be sure to keep you posted as this exciting new program develops.



Students with an ASC health counselor at school in Hawassa.

News and Activities

Hallways of ASC: I Had the Dream Team!

ASC Attorneys Give Client Very Special Birthday Present



African Services' staff attorney Jessica Greenberg (left) with Vivian

On April 30, 2014, African Services' staff attorneys Jessica Greenberg and Corina Bogaciu presented Vivian with a birthday present she'll always hold dear: Freedom.

Freedom, that is, after she spent 19 months unlawfully detained. Charges dismissed. This story reads like a legal drama you'd see on television: A passionate, relentless young attorney tries everything to free her client and right the wrongs of an often tired, over-wrought system. And as one might imagine, the story involves a lot of sweat and tears -- not to mention a heavy dose of persistent and creative legal strategy -before Vivian saw the light of day and the promise to hold her three children in her arms again.

"This is so surreal. I can't believe I'm actually here [African Services' office]," Vivian said. "I'm so used to just hearing her [Jessica's] voice."

Vivian found herself outside the scope of immigration relief due to one of what would be many careless mistakes made by her first attorney. Jessica took on Vivian as an ASC nominal fee client after Vivian finally fired her first attorney, sadly, after a long year of living in prison, separated from her children.

"An attorney was hired. Her attorney was incompetent," Jessica said after learning of what had happened to Vivian while under her first counsel. "Nothing was ever addressed."

Upon taking on Vivian as a client, Jessica had to quickly figure out how to remove all sorts of conditions in order to see her client released from detention. Jessica tried every angle she could think of over the coming months, often making trips to Dutchess County where Vivian once lived. After encountering many roadblocks and navigating what seemed like countless detours, Jessica shared the first glimmer of hope with Vivian: immigration relief was on its way. But this was only going to grant Vivian a chance for release in 2015, which was out of the question as far as Jessica was concerned.

"Immigration and Customs Enforcement weren't interested in releasing Vivian, but were actively arguing to deport her," Jessica said. So, working together with Corina -- with the invaluable guidance of supervising attorney Kate Webster -- a writ of habeas corpus was filed to release Vivian. And that finally did it. Charges were dismissed and Vivian would be released the day after her thirtieth birthday.

"I call African Services the Dream Team and I'm very grateful," Vivian said.

"This is a dream come true."

Vivian isn't someone you'd guess just spent 19 months locked up and the observation begs the question: How many have found themselves behind bars without competent counsel, without a voice -- losing hope every day. Vivian shared her cell with a woman who had been detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement for 30 months and another 22 months. Five to six months is the maximum time the Supreme Court says one can be detained under an immigration hold, but without competent counsel, non-citizens waste away for months in detention.

African Services' dedicated and passionate staff of attorneys provides low-cost immigration legal services to families and individuals in need of immigration assistance. All are welcome regardless of race, country of origin, gender, sexual orientation or religious affiliation. All services are confidential. For a consultation with an African Services immigration attorney, call 212.222.3882 or email immigration@africanservices.org.

We work in partnership and with the support of various organizations throughout New York including the New York Immigration Coalition, Libertas Center for Survivors of Torture, Human Rights First, Legal Services for New York and HIV Law Project to protect and promote the rights of immigrants.



Vivian stands in between ASC staff attorneys Jessica Greenberg (left) and Corina Bogaciu (right)

Robin Hood Tax Gains Big Momentum



Congressman Charlie Rangel met with Robin Hood Tax supporters in his New York City office recently and agreed to co-sponsor HR 1579, also known as the Robin Hood Tax on Wall Street. This is really big news for this increasingly popular tax and it wouldn't have happened without activists such as African Services' very own **Amanda Lugg** (far right) along with advocates from Vocal NY, New York State Nurses Association, Health GAP, National Nurses United, ACT UP, and NY Harm Reduction Educators, who have been pressing the Congressman for some time. HR 1579 now has the most support of any bill in Congress. For more information on Robin Hood Tax visit www.robinhoodtax.org.

Also big **CONGRATULATIONS** to ASC's **Amanda Lugg** who was recently elected Chair of Detention Watch Network. This spectacular organization works through the collective strength and diversity of its members to expose and challenge the injustices of the U.S. immigration detention and deportation system and advocate for profound change that promotes the rights and dignity of all persons.

ASC Staff Honored at African Empowerment Women's Day

Yvonne Mbewe-Palmer and Adama Traore Recognized at Celebration

We are thrilled to announce that African Services' **Yvonne Mbewe-Palmer** and **Adama Traore** were recently honored at the African Empowerment Women's Day Celebration held at Bronx Community College. African Empowerment Women's Day Celebration recognizes the accomplishments and contributions of African women in New York and we are thrilled to have two of our very own among the honorees.

Yvonne is ASC's Supervising Family Social Worker in the Family Case Management program and Adama is our Navigation to Care Coordinator.
Congratulations ladies!



From left: Gene Adams, Yvonne Mbewe-Palmer, Adama Traore, Mrs. Diallo, Prof. Catherine Mbewe, and Ophelia Achiaa.



Advocating for Single-Payer Health Care System



"Healthcare is not a privilege; it is a basic human right."

- Participants at New York Single-Payer Health Care Rally

African Services' **Amanda Lugg** and **Bakary Tandia**, along with ASC clients, travelled to Albany on May 6 to push for a single-payer health care system in New York. They rallied with groups from all over the state in support of New York Health bills A5389A (Assemblyman Richard N. Gottfried) and S2078A (Senator Bill Perkins), which aim at ensuring that all New Yorkers have access to medical insurance without exception.

ASC clients were remarkably impressive in articulating the need for a single-payer system, according to Tandia. The rally was coordinated by Physicians For A National Health Program, along with labor organizations and community, faith and public health groups.

CDC Spotlights ASC's Hep B Program

African Services was featured in a new CDC Mortality and Morbidity Weekly Report spotlighting our hepatitis B screening and linkage to care program.

"[ASC's] Community education efforts included outreach through mosques serving immigrants from Africa, visits to taxi garages to speak with drivers from West Africa, participating in French language 'conference-call radio' shows, and issuing radio public service announcements."

"During the reporting period, ASC tested 1,732 persons (54% born in Africa, 23% in Asia, and 23% in Latin America or the Caribbean); 145 (8.4%) were HBsAg-positive, with the highest prevalence seen among 880 persons born in West Africa (11.4%)."

Early Identification and Linkage to Care of Persons with Chronic Hepatitis B Virus Infection — Three U.S. Sites, 2012–2014

*Geoff A. Richard, MPH; Gilbert Riancho, MD; Anon Vanderhoff, Kim Nichols, S.M., Sus M. Chen, MPH; David L. Wise, MD; Bo Y. S. Schuchman, MPH; Deborah T. Haidt, MD; Rebecca Galati, PhD; John W. Ward, MD**
(Author affiliations are in order.)

In the United States, an estimated 8.8–14 million persons are living with chronic hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection. Among these persons, as many as 70% were born in countries of Asia, Africa, or other regions where HBV is moderately to highly endemic. Hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) prevalence is 2%–11% (HBV-associated cirrhosis and liver cancer are major health problems for these populations [1]). Most persons with HBV were infected at birth or during early childhood and are asymptomatic until advanced liver disease develops. To address these concerns, CDC spearheaded HBsAg testing for all persons born in these areas and linkage to medical care and supportive services for those who are infected [1]. In 2012, CDC awarded funds to nine sites to implement this recommendation. This report describes programs at three sites (New York, New York; Minneapolis, St. Paul, Minnesota; and San Diego, California) that conducted HBV testing, in clinical or community settings, and followed for medical evaluation and care (one person whose HBsAg test results were positive during October 2012–March 2014; the three sites tested 4,727 persons for HBV infection; 93% of who were HBsAg positive). Among the HBsAg-positive persons, 34% were informed of their results, 30% were counseled, 16% were referred for care, and 16% attended their scheduled first medical visit. These projects demonstrate that community-based programs can identify infected persons among populations with a high prevalence of HBV infection and refer HBsAg-positive persons to care. Individualized efforts to assist patients with accessing and attending health care services ("patient navigation services") can increase the number of persons who follow up on referrals and receive recommended care.

New York City, African Services Committee

The African Services Committee (ASC) is a community-based organization located in Harlem, serving a primarily non-Hispanic African American population. Much of the work of the ASC is carried out by staff members speaking French and Wolof, a language widely used in Senegal and The Gambia. Community education efforts included outreach through mosques serving immigrants from Africa, visits to taxi garages to speak with drivers from West Africa, participating in French language "conference-call radio" shows, and issuing radio

Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota Department of Public Health Refugee Services

The Minnesota Refugee Health Program is responsible for assisting the initial health screening for communicable disease among newly arrived refugees. Testing for HBsAg has been a routine screening activity for many years, but no resources were available to support counseling and referral for persons who were HBsAg-positive in Minnesota's St. Paul. The program partners with health departments serving Hennepin County and Ramsey County to provide referrals with HBV screening at their first medical visit, as a large health department clinic (Hennepin County), and at the office of designated primary care providers (St. Paul Ramsey County). With support through this CDC initiative, HBsAg-positive persons were informed of their test results at the second visit, counseled, and referred for further evaluation and medical care. First-time workers who are fluent in Somali and in Kuran, the language spoken by most of the refugees originating in Minnesota's St. Paul, the program partners with Hennepin County to provide a clinic-based or community-based patient navigation services and counseling at the health clinic and patient navigation services at all HBsAg-positive refugees because that these refugees were able to attend appointments made at a low-quality clinic or with other primary care providers in the community. Navigation activities included scheduled and ad-hoc visits to appointments,

Fun in the City

Eirik Omile, Communications Director recommends...

Seun Kuti & Egypt 80

Live at the Highline Ballroom

Fela's youngest child has full-steamed ahead with his own infectious brand of Afrobeat: a sound as compelling as it was when Fela Anikulapo Kuti first fused jazz, funk and soul with highlife and other African rhythms, but with topical lyrics and contemporary influences giving it a modern twist. So far there have been two critically acclaimed albums: 2008's *Many Things* and 2011's *From Africa With Fury: Rise*.



When: Tuesday, June 10, 2014

Where: 431 W 16th St. New York, NY 10011 between 9th & 10th Ave

Click [here](#) for more information.

also recommended...



NYC SummerStage

From Ethiopian star Teddy Afro to the amazing dance crew Urban Bush Women, this season's SummerStage lineup will not disappoint.

SummerStage, a program of City Parks Foundation, presents performances of outstanding artistic quality, free of charge, to serve the diverse communities of New York City. The artists represent a breadth of genres and cultures and perform in an outdoor setting accessible to people of all ages and

backgrounds. SummerStage strives to develop audiences' deepening appreciation for contemporary, traditional, and emerging artists as well as the communities in which these artists originate.

When: All Summer long!

Where: Various locations throughout NYC, including Central Park.

AIDS Walk 2014!



ASC's co-executive director Kim Nichols holds the African Services sign alongside her mother as they walk with ASC staff attorney Steve Sacco, pictured in the foreground.

On what was a gorgeous Sunday in May, African Services joined 35,000 fellow walkers to take part in an event very dear to our hearts: The 29th annual AIDS Walk New York. This year the event raised an astounding 5.1 million to help those living with HIV.

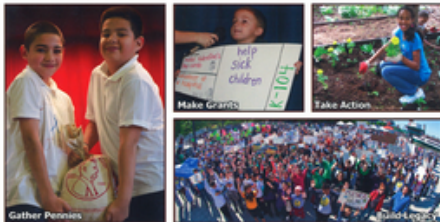
Once again, ASC dedicated the walk to help fund our pediatric HIV program in Ethiopia. Nearly \$2,000 has been raised so far in funds that will directly help the most vulnerable families, allowing us to continue their treatment, provide crucial nutritional supplements, purchase testing kits and lab supplies, and extend outreach to the most at-risk people in need.

Although ASC sadly didn't raise as much money as previous years, it isn't too late to help. Click [here](#) to support this important program and thank you to all who supported us this year. ASC New York and our staff and clients in ASC Ethiopia are grateful.

Thank You Penny Harvest!

A gift from us

PENNY HARVEST STUDENTS CHANGING THE WORLD ONE PENNY AT A TIME!



African Services is grateful to the **Penny Harvest** students at **P.S.M.S 161 Pedro Albizu Campos** for recently donating \$700 to ASC. This generous donation means so much to us and the clients we serve each day. **Thank you!**

New Yorkers for Real Immigration Reform Rally

Voice of America Interviews ASC's Bakary Tandia



African Services Committee's steadfast advocate for immigration reform, Bakary Tandia, represented ASC and our clients at the New Yorkers for Real Immigration Reform rally, Thursday, April 10th at Foley Square in NYC. Tandia joined hundreds of participants representing groups from around the country to demand fairness and equality for immigrants in New York and across the nation. Adam Philips of Voice of America also interviewed Tandia during the rally.

Click [here](#) to take a look at VOA's coverage.

