



AFRICAN SERVICES

COMMITTEE

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Ethiopia Trip Wrap-Up



Kim Nichols, Co-Executive Director, posing in front of the new Shola Market Clinic Pharmacy with Ejegayehu Andualem, ART Nurse, and Tizeta Egale, the Shola Health Officer.

Hello all! I am writing to you after a brief and busy two-week excursion to Ethiopia. During that time I travelled from ASC's newest clinic in the south, in the bustling town of Zeway, to our third clinic in the north, in the windy city of Mekele. I spent some time with our staff in our longest-established Addis

Ababa Shola Market clinic, and with new management staff at our Addis Ababa headquarters office. I wanted to share with you the news and updates from our clinics in Ethiopia.

The new clinic in Zeway is opening this week. Since October of 2010, the five-member ASC team in Zeway have been operating out of five sweltering tents in the center square of town, providing HIV rapid testing and counseling and referral to treatment and care. They've tested up to 30 patients per day, six days a week. From this week on, ASC will be providing services from a 10-room clinic just off the main street of town, serving thousands of townspeople and migrant laborers who are flooding into Zeway to work in the new floriculture businesses run by Sher Ethiopia, and the vineyards established by Castel Winery. Like our other clinics, the Zeway clinic will scale up, with future funding from Castel and others, to provide antiretroviral treatment (ART) and prevention of opportunistic infections, nutrition and case management

support.

In Shola Market, ASC's pharmacy is its newest addition... to be followed this month by a TB testing and TB directly observed therapy dedicated clinic space. The pharmacy is fully stocked with antiretrovirals, antibiotics, antifungals, analgesics, oral and injectible contraceptives, and multivitamin/mineral supplements. This is thanks to the Ethiopian Ministry of Health's collaboration in providing ASC access to all essential medicines necessary to treat all newly-diagnosed HIV and TB patients on site in Shola Market. Our new Shola Health Officer is managing the 27 new patients who have enrolled in the pre-ART and ART program since December, last year.

In Mekele, the laboratory is now fully outfitted with CD4, chemistry, and hematology equipment. ART patient enrollment at the Mekele clinic will be beginning in a few short weeks, following a government funded training for our newly hired Health Officer and ART nurse.

In all sites, the impact of our funding from UNFPA was broadly apparent. The integration of sexual and reproductive health, family planning, and HIV services, along with TB testing and treatment is in full swing at ASC clinics and maximizes scarce resources in the provision of multiple services.

I beam with pride when I think about the amazing work that African Services has accomplished in the mere 8 years we have been in operation there. Our ability to now not only offer prevention, but life-saving treatment, gives us an even greater reach and influence in the communities we serve. Thank you to everyone who has supported our efforts abroad and here in New York City; we could not have done it without you.

Sincerely--

Kim Nichols, Co-Executive Director

News and Activities

Program Spotlight: ASC Legal Department



When Mariama, an undocumented Senegalese woman, married James, an American citizen, she felt optimistic that her legal status woes would disappear and that she would lead a happy life in the United States. But when her husband began abusing her, her future suddenly looked a lot bleaker. James began refusing to file her green card paperwork and became increasingly violent. Mariama felt trapped, and avoided seeking help from the police for fear of being deported. When she found the courage to come to African Services Committee (ASC) for a consultation, she discovered that African Services' attorneys had resources available to help her escape her toxic marriage and apply for citizenship on her

own.

The African Services' legal department has been in existence for over 12 years, and offers a diverse range of civil and immigration legal support to clients. Free legal services are offered to clients who have been diagnosed with HIV, and include support for citizenship petitions, asylum application, and the pursuit of work authorization and other types of visas. Additionally, the department offers civil legal support for cases dealing with public assistance issues, job discrimination, family law, and housing. Through these initiatives, the ASC legal department makes available crucial legal support and representation for immigrants who would otherwise not have access to it.

ASC attorneys undertake many types of citizenship applications. As in Mariama's case above, African Services is dealing more and more with cases involving immigrant women and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). These pertain to situations in which a client marries a U.S. citizen and is eligible to apply for a green card through marriage but becomes a victim of spousal abuse. "Many women have stayed in very dangerous situations to get legal status. They were unaware that if your spouse won't apply for you, you can prove abuse and apply yourself," said Andrea Panjwani, Supervising Attorney at African Services.

There are many HIV-related civil legal cases addressed at ASC. These can be tied to HIV-related domestic violence, and housing and employment discrimination. "We've seen cases where an employer finds out that someone is HIV positive and terminates their employment," Panjwani said. "There are also cases in which an employer will withhold wages and threaten to expose the worker's status if they tell anyone." In addition, attorneys assist with public benefits cases if a client's benefits have been wrongly denied or reduced. Additionally, the department occasionally hosts community education seminars that provide training to HIV support providers.

As clients' needs and demands for their services grow, the legal department continues to explore creative ways to expand its staff and capacity. In addition to providing legal services free of charge, African Services plans to establish a nominal fee clinic that would offer low cost, quality legal representation for immigration issues. This service will target newly arrived immigrants who would likely be targeted by private law firms. Unfortunately, the representation through such firms is costly and the quality of representation is lacking, and these clients end up seeking out African Services to help undo the mistakes that had been done elsewhere. "This is our first foray into being more entrepreneurial," Panjwani said. "We're trying to see if we can prevent some people from falling into that system." In the upcoming months, contract attorneys will be working to develop, staff, and promote the expanded department. The expansion will incorporate new research programs as well. Chitra Aiyar, an ASC staff attorney, is developing a survey initiative that will analyze clients' decision-making process regarding legal support and examine fraud in immigration services to speculate how clients seeking immigration assistance can be protected.

The comprehensive legal program offered at ASC was not established overnight, but evolved over time. Twelve years ago, administrators realized that it was an integral aspect of the assistance that African Services provides. Through all its changes, the legal department's number one priority has consistently been to maintain the highest standards of service and

representation. ASC's approach to support is a "very client-intensive process," explained Kate Stinson, ASC Legal Fellow. Clients are included every step of the way and are asked to actively contribute in the processing of their application. ASC's legal department has provided indispensable support to the immigrant community, and will continue to do so for years to come.

"It's rare that you can be in the legal sector and have this range of services," Aiyar said. "I don't know any other organization at which the legal support is so comprehensive. It makes you happy to be a lawyer."

--Chloe Noonan

African Services Debuts 30th Anniversary Logo



African Services Committee (ASC) will soon celebrate its 30th anniversary, and ASC is releasing its new anniversary logo in honor of the occasion. This commemorates ASC's vital support to the African immigrant community since 1981.

Founded by Ethiopian refugees, ASC began as a modest organization dedicated to extending a helping hand to newcomers in the city. Today, ASC is a multiservice agency that offers a comprehensive range of services to immigrants. Through health support, legal services, and advocacy initiatives, the staff works to ensure that immigrants have the assistance that they need, whether it be medical care, housing assistance, or help filing for citizenship. We look forward to continuing our service to the community for years to come.

Stay tuned throughout the year for special events and activities celebrating our 30 years of service!

African Services' Clients Participate in the 2011 Immigrant's Day of Action in Albany



On March 1, 2011, New York celebrated the 14th annual Immigrants' Day of Action. On this day, immigrants from all corners of New York State head to Albany to urge legislators to adopt immigrant-friendly policies. African Services' Community Advocate, Bakary Tandia, led the ASC coalition to the statehouse.



The day's events started with an indoor rally attended by over 700 people from over 50 organizations. African Services Committee (ASC) was represented by a large delegation of staff, clients and community members. In the opening remarks, Chang Wa Hong, Executive Director of the New York Immigration Coalition, highlighted the significant role immigrants have always played in various aspects of the life of New York State. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, immigrants comprise of 26.6% of the New York workforce. A significant number of the population, that holds a small amount of influence on public policy.

In addition to the opening address, attendees heard statements from community leaders and elected officials. Assemblyman Guillermo Linares pointed out that the upcoming New York State budget cuts would deeply affect immigrant families and compromise their future. He continued on to inform attendees that it was very important for them to make their presence felt in the capitol in the days ahead.

African Services' clients had the opportunity to make their voices heard during legislative visits with various elected officials. ASC clients shared their stories with officials, and were able to describe how their lives were transformed by the essential services that ASC provides to newcomers.

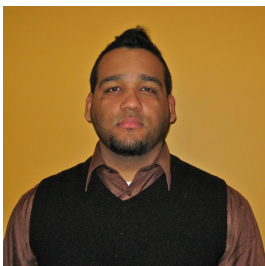
"Thanks to African Services, I was able to adjust my status and attend college," one client told the audience. "I have now my associate degree, and my goal is to continue on for my bachelors."

Overall, the day was a huge success, and gave everyone an opportunity to take control of their destiny and make their voices heard.

It was an empowering experience for clients, and they were very happy to have made the trip to Albany. All who participated left with the feeling of having represented the voice of the community, and learning that every voice makes a difference!

--Bakary Tandia

New Additions to the ASC Family



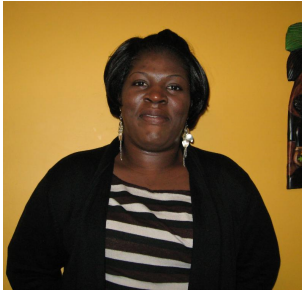
Carlos Camilo is an assistant in our on-site Testing Center, providing counseling and testing for HIV, Hepatitis, Tuberculosis and Sexually Transmitted Infections and referrals to care within African Services and at partner hospitals throughout New York City. Carlos was previously employed as a testing counselor at Alianza Dominicana, a non-profit organization also based in the City. He is currently attending B.C.C. for nursing. Carlos was born in the Dominican Republic, and is fluent in Spanish and English.





Saba Bekele is an assistant in our on-site Testing Center, providing counseling and testing for HIV, Hepatitis, Tuberculosis and Sexually Transmitted Infections and referrals to care within African Services and at partner hospitals throughout New York City. Saba studied medicine at Addis Ababa University, in her home country of Ethiopia. She is fluent

in Amharic and English.



Simone Charles-Burrell is a data entry specialist at African Services. Simone was previously employed as a medical assistant, biller, and receptionist at Mercy Midwives, an OBGYN clinic located in the Bronx. She received her undergraduate degree at Monroe College, and is certified as a clinical administrative medical assistant by the ABC Training Center and the National Health Association in New York.

Simone is half Dominican and half Jamaican, and speaks English.

Fun in the City

Staff Recommendations

Chloe Noonan, Communications Intern recommends...



**Museum for African Art
Family Craft Friday: Malagasy Pots**

**Museum for African Art teaching artist landry
Randriamandroso will guide participants in creating a
windowsill planter in Malagasy fashion!**

Charles A. Dana Discovery Center, 110th Street between

5th Ave and Lenox Ave

FREE. No advance registration. All ages welcome. Space is limited, no afterschool groups please. For more information, call 212-860-1370 or visit their website [here](#).

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