



For immediate release

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NORTH AMERICA'S LEADING INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS JOIN FORCES

New partnership calls on all individuals living with HIV/AIDS in the U.S and Canada to mobilize and hold their governments accountable for their role in the global pandemic.

(Washington, DC) The Global Network of People Living With HIV/AIDS-North America (GNP+NA) and the International Community of Women-North America (ICW-NA) have forged a partnership to impact the role that North America plays in addressing the global pandemic. "Individuals living with HIV disease in North America must be front and center influencing and guiding public policy-making at all levels," said Deloris Dockrey, GNP+NA Board Member. "Policy making without the input of those affected is just bad policy making!" she added.

This year, both organizations will be working to inform and mobilize their constituents around key Global AIDS issues and creating opportunities to organize activities, projects and programs for people living with HIV in North America.

GNP+NA and ICW+NA will work within three closely interrelated areas: advocacy, capacity building, and communication. Their agenda will adhere to the Global Advocacy Agenda of the Global Network of People living with HIV/AIDS (GNP+): a) promoting global access to HIV/AIDS care and treatment; b) combating stigma and discrimination; c) re-examining and promoting the greater and more meaningful involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS in the decisions that affect their lives.

The Greater Involvement of People Living with AIDS (GIPA) principle, celebrating its 10th anniversary, was proclaimed at the Paris Summit in 1994 and is reflected in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS from the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on HIV/AIDS in June 2001. Governments from 189 countries committed to the 10-year plan, which is a road map for a global response to HIV/AIDS. The United States and Canada both committed to the Declaration, realizing the value of this important tool in the global and domestic response to HIV/AIDS.

"Today, it is internationally recognized that a crucial goal and hallmark of HIV/AIDS advocacy is the meaningful involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in all aspects of programmatic and policy related responses," stated Errol Chin-Loy, US Co-

Chair of GNP+NA. “During the early phase of the HIV epidemic, PLWHA helped each other and drew support from friends, family, and sympathetic community members. However, the medical, public health and research establishments took time to get acclimatized to the importance of bringing PLWHA into the decision-making and planning processes.”

“This is an opportune time to begin this collaborative piece of work since the theme for the World AIDS Day 2004 earlier this month focused on women, girls, and HIV/AIDS,” Antigone Hodgins, representative for ICW stated. “The theme 'Have you heard me today?' explores how gender inequality fuels the AIDS epidemic. All over the world, women do not enjoy the same rights and access to employment, property, and education as men. Women and girls are also more likely to face sexual violence. This makes them more vulnerable to HIV and as the primary caregivers, to the impact of AIDS.” Hodgins added.

“This agreement will strategically place both organizations in key positions as there are two significant events for the HIV+ community taking place over the next two years: the 12th International Conference for people living with HIV/AIDS in Lima, Peru in October, 2005 and the International AIDS Conference in Toronto in July 2006,” noted Pius White, Canadian Co-Chair for GNP+NA.

About GNP+NA and ICW

GNP+NA is the North American affiliate of GNP+. The mission of GNP+NA is to improve the quality of life of people living with HIV/AIDS by creating and sustaining an active North American network of PLWHA's working regionally to address the global pandemic. GNP+NA endorses the vision of GNP+ to improve the quality of life of people living with HIV/AIDS by lobbying, linking and sharing. The goal of GNP+ is to create, organize and support a base for the global network by: Lobbying for inclusion of people living with HIV/AIDS and their interests; Linking people living with HIV/AIDS through local, regional and global meetings and conferences; and Sharing knowledge and building capacity locally, regionally and globally.

ICW's participation in international and national conferences, meetings, and global advocacy projects is a vital part of the organization's work and it continuously advocates for HIV positive women's rights and brings their concerns to national and international arenas. ICW's collaborative work with other prominent organizations such as GNP+, the International AIDS Society (IAS), International Council of AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO), UNAIDS, and various international NGOs has continued and expanded. Regional contacts are at the heart of all ICW's work and form the link between the London, England home office and members.