



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **AIHA's HIV/AIDS Twinning Center Launches New Initiative to Build Health Sector Capacity in Ethiopia**

#### **PEPFAR-funded Project Will Harness the Knowledge and Expertise of the Ethiopian Diaspora Community to Combat AIDS**

**WASHINGTON, DC, May 23, 2006**—The American International Health Alliance (AIHA) has launched a new healthcare initiative designed to improve Ethiopia's capacity to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS by engaging professionals from the Diaspora for volunteer assignments in Ethiopia. This initiative operates under the Volunteer Healthcare Corps, an integral part of AIHA's HIV/AIDS Twinning Center, which is funded through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.

In January 2005, the Ethiopian Ministry of Health launched a free antiretroviral therapy (ART) program with support from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the US President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief. The program seeks to expand ART access to adequately prepared hospitals and health centers across the country. To attain this challenging and critical goal, however, significant enhancements to the human and organizational capacity of the health sector are needed.

Visions for Development, Inc.—a Washington, DC-based nonprofit that promotes the overall social and economic health and well-being of ethnic and linguistic minorities in the United States and implements proven exemplary human and organizational development practices in developing countries around the world—will work to increase the awareness among professionals in the Diaspora about Ethiopia's National HIV/AIDS Campaign and inform them of opportunities to become involved in volunteer assignments in Ethiopia. Visions will also partner with other Ethiopian Diaspora-based organizations, such as People to People Inc., the Ethiopian North American Health Professionals Association, and Group Against Poverty-AIDS, Inc. to help ensure the success of the initiative.

The United States is home to a large Ethiopian and Ethiopian-American population, many of whom have acquired education and training in the health field. The existence of a well-educated and trained Diaspora population—who possess valuable experience and skills and essential language and cultural knowledge to provide an innovative and culturally appropriate means to increase capacity in Ethiopia—creates a unique opportunity to effectively increase human and organizational capacity in Ethiopia.

The initiative will mobilize the Diaspora population through the development of the Network of Ethiopian Professionals in the Diaspora (NEPID) database. The NEPID database will help identify and place interested and qualified professionals from the Diaspora, primarily at ART sites and HIV/AIDS service organizations where the volunteers will work to increase human

and organizational capacity for Ethiopia's implementation and rapid scaling up of the National HIV/AIDS Campaign.

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*Created in 1992 by a consortium of major healthcare provider associations and professional medical education organizations, AIHA establishes and manages twinning partnerships between health-related institutions in the United States and their counterparts in Africa, Asia, Eurasia, and the Caribbean. Since its inception, AIHA has supported more than 120 partnerships linking dedicated volunteers in the United States with communities, institutions, and individual colleagues overseas in a concerted effort to improve health service delivery in countries with limited resources. Operating under various cooperative agreements and grants from US and international donor agencies including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID); the US Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA); the World Health Organization (WHO); the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; and the German Society for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), AIHA, its partnerships, and complementary programs represent one of the US healthcare sector's most coordinated responses to global health issues.*

*Support for the HIV/AIDS Twinning Center is provided by HRSA, a leading provider of HIV/AIDS care and treatment services to underserved populations in resource-poor settings in the United States and, more recently, throughout the world.*

*For more information about AIHA, visit our Web site at [www.aiha.com](http://www.aiha.com).*

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