



# Heartline

June 2004

The Official newsletter of the caribbean regional network of people Living with HIV/AIDS (CRN+)

## HEARTLINE: A Harbinger of Good Tidings

The Caribbean Regional Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (CRN+) takes pleasure in the launch of its official newsletter HEARTLINE. This has been a work in progress for several years. As a matter of fact we did make an attempt through the valiant efforts of CRN+ members, Ms. Suzette Moses-Burton and Mr. Michael Fox to create an e-news letter. However, this was suspended for a number of reasons - the national networks were all still in the embryonic stages, there were two volunteers in the Secretariat and, most significantly, there was no funding.

Today, almost eight years since the birth of the network, a lot has happened; and in subsequent issues of Heartline we will

update you all. For this issue I thought I would start with some GOOD NEWS. CRN+ currently has a Five-Year Strategic Plan 2003 - 2007 and a Two-Year Operational Plan. We also have new vision and mission statements. The vision of CRN+:

**“CRN+ is the authentic voice of Caribbean people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) as a full and equal partner in the collaborative fight against HIV/AIDS. CRN+ is driven by PLWHA making a meaningful difference to their lives.”**

For those of you who are interested in obtaining a soft copy of the strategic plan please e-mail us at our new address:

crnplus@tstt.net.tt

More good news: In the early life of the network the goal was as follows: “To facilitate access to information exchange, advocacy, lobbying and capacity building of people living with HIV/AIDS in the wider Caribbean.” We were essentially a proposal driven organization and, as mentioned before, all “staff” positions were voluntary. Well, through the collective efforts of the Membership and the Secretariat the network embarked on an advocacy and lobbying strategy which finally began to pay off.

Organizations and individuals stood up and took notice. This has translated into grant

*continued on page 4*

## CRN+ and SIRHASC: working to develop PLWHA Networks

The European Union-funded SIRHASC project (Strengthening the Institutional Response to HIV/AIDS/STI in the Caribbean) provides technical, material and financial support to six regional institutions to co-ordinate, plan, implement and monitor a regional response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in 15 ACP countries in the Caribbean.

The project's goal is a reduction in the spread and impact of STI, HIV and AIDS in the region. Its purpose is to strengthen regional institutional capacity to plan and co-ordinate an effective response to the STI/HIV/AIDS epidemic, particularly in the worst affected countries.

CRN+' mandate, within the context of this project, is to develop an expanded and effective regional network of PLWHA advocating for improved care and support and contributing to national policy development. PLWHA in the Caribbean have been marginalized from policy-making, programme-design and care initiatives. As the only regional institution representing the aspirations of PLWHA, CRN+ has been developing the regional network of PLWHA and implementing the following activities:

✓ Training workshops in advocacy, peer-counselling and communication in 6 national networks in Antigua, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica and St. Lucia;

✓ Financial and technical support: the project provides office equipment. It also covers operational costs and stipends for a team of three volunteers in each

*continued on page 2*

### Inside this issue:

Legal Assistance for PWHA in the Dominican Republic .....	2
Buy a Ribbon .....	2
Capacity-building Through Exchange .....	3
Upcoming Events .....	3
Hopepals: Helping Our People Live Productive Lives .....	3



# Legal Assistance for PLWHA in the Dominican Republic

The Dominican Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (REDOVIH+) is a non-profit organization. Established in 1997 and incorporated by decree No.40-98, REDOVIH+ is dedicated to defending the rights of the persons living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) and to improving their quality of life through the support groups throughout the Dominican Republic.

REDOVIH+ is directed by a General Assembly of members and a Committee Board, and is actually comprised of twenty-seven support groups and a membership of three thousand people.

As a reply to the human rights violation of PLWHA, their loved ones and those vulnerable to the epidemic, there had been a prevailing need which culminated in the creation of the **Legal Assistance Project (PAL)** in May 2004, following our first initiative in the period 1999-2001. This initiative was made possible through an

alliance between the Work Minister and the AIDS' Presidential (COPRESIDA) with the support of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

### OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Offer information, advice and legal assistance to PLWHAs.
- ✓ Provide legal capacity-building in Humans Rights to PLWHAs from different sectors of society.
- ✓ Develop juridical and social research on Human Rights' and HIV/AIDS.
- ✓ Stimulate the legal reformation processes that strengthen the protection of internal human rights systems.

### SERVICES:

- ✓ REDOVIH+ offers legal assistance to persons who have been constrained in their political, economic, social and cultural undertakings because of their

condition as PLWHA.

- ✓ A juridical team accompanied by psychologists, offers support in the emotional recovery of PLWHA through counsel and follow-ups, in order to achieve individual and community development.
- ✓ Family attention, appellation and consultancy on Humans Rights issues.
- ✓ Capacity-building.
- ✓ At population level, REDOVIH+ counts on a network of professional, as well as on businessmen and students interested in the defense and promotion of human rights and research.
- ✓ Communication.
- ✓ Documentation Center.
- ✓ Reflections and human rights work-proposals through publications. ■

Luz Aida Cruz  
Psychologist - PAL  
REDOVIH+

### *"CRN+ and SIRHASC..." continued from page 1*

network to run the daily activities of the office;

- ✓ Exchange visits between networks to share experience;
- ✓ Review meetings of representatives of the six national networks to share information, experiences and best practices;
- ✓ Organizing CRN+ annual general meetings and capacity-building workshops.

The project implementation started in 2001 and will most likely benefit from a no-cost extension until December 2005. New activities have been included in the workplan for this period. They consist particularly of strengthening public/private partnerships in the delivery of counselling, through the organisation of workshops for PLWHA and health care providers. For CRN+ and the six participating national networks, the objective of the no-cost extension period is sustainability. ■

Raphaële Dambo  
Programme Officer, CRN+

## Buy a Ribbon

The Community Action Resource (CARE) in Trinidad and Tobago seeks to enhance the quality of life of people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS, through advocacy and the provision of support services. As an NGO there is always the need to continually raise funds to support the services we provide. Since 1994 our Women's Group has started a Ribbons project. This project has now become one of our funding resources: schools and community-based organizations are now collaborating by buying our ribbons. This year we wish to achieve a greater goal with our Ribbons Project.

At present we at CARE provide services in the following areas:

- Individual, Group, Family Counselling.
- Complementary Health: Home care treatment/ parallel services.
- Drop-in Centre/ Support and Referral Services.
- Information & Education.
- Community Outreach.
- Training & Research.

All you need to do is buy our ribbons and help sensitize your community. For further information, you can contact us at (868) 625-0632 or e-mail us at [exdir@tstt.net.tt](mailto:exdir@tstt.net.tt). ■

CARE



## Capacity-building Through Exchange

Marten Colom of the Suriname-based Stichting Mamio Namen Project is currently visiting Trinidad and Tobago under an exchange programme organized by CRN+ and funded by Canadian Crossroads International. This pilot programme has been initiated with a view to enhancing the sharing of knowledge and capacity-building within the networks.

The Trinidad and Tobago HIV/AIDS Alliance has graciously agreed to host Marten and is coordinating his internship at various NGOs throughout the country. Since his arrival in May, Marten has spent two weeks at Friends For Life, one week at CARITAS learning about home-based care and will soon go on to visit MSMNPA to learn about programme management and grant writing and to see

first hand how they develop their communications strategy. He has also spent one day with the Caribbean Conference of Churches who are in the process of developing a faith-based response to HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean.

At the end of this programme, Marten is expected to have greater insight on Programme Management, Proposal Writing, Communications, how the networks operate in Trinidad and Tobago and the state of HIV/AIDS in Trinidad and Tobago. Marten will return to Suriname in August, where he will share the knowledge gained under the exchange programme with the St. Mamio Namen Project and other such organizations. ■

Trionne Major  
Information/Communications Officer  
CRN+



### Upcoming Events

#### July

- 🌀 15th International HIV/AIDS Conference in Bangkok, Thailand.  
[Contact: [alsand@caricom.org](mailto:alsand@caricom.org)]

#### August

#### September

- 🌀 Hopepals sensitization training for employers through the Employers Federation in Grenada.
- 🌀 Proposal writing course for Hopepals members.  
[Contact: [hopepals@caribsurf.com](mailto:hopepals@caribsurf.com)]

## Hopepals: Helping Our People Live Productive Lives

**MOTTO:** Hope, Help & Empowerment

**Mission Statement:** To facilitate an acceptable and attainable standard of living in a positive environment through Hope, Help & Empowerment.

### Aim of the Network:

The Network works closely with CRN+ (The Caribbean Regional Network+) and benefits closely from regional provisions in projects such as SIRHASC which has provided funding for the establishment and operation of an office. The Network aims at operating a Counselling Centre to:

- 🌀 Assist in the development of skills in project proposal writing and management.
- 🌀 Assist with the setting up of structures, build capacity, and mobilize resources.
- 🌀 Train PLWHA to acquire knowledge,

and develop skills in information technology.

- 🌀 Train PLWHA to effectively counsel peers or to become professional counsellors.
- 🌀 Provide training in home care techniques.
- 🌀 Assist in drafting HIV/AIDS legislation, especially with regard to confidentiality and the workplace.
- 🌀 Develop skills for resource mobilization for continuity of implementation of programmes and projects.
- 🌀 Collaborate with the Ministry of Health to provide adequate care, support and treatment for PLWHA, including anti-retroviral medication

### The Objectives of the Network are:

- 🌀 To offer support to members and assist in

empowering them.

- 🌀 To educate the general Public on HIV/AIDS.
- 🌀 To reach out to the families and caregivers of the infected community.
- 🌀 To seek community support for PLWHA.
- 🌀 To build the capacity of the Network.
- 🌀 To advocate and lobby on behalf of persons living with HIV/AIDS for basic human rights and equality. ■

Rachel S. Charles  
President/Office Coordinator  
Hopepals



"Heartline ..." cont'd  
from page 1

funding. It is therefore with a sense of pride and humility that I share with you the good news that CRN+ currently has four funding grants.

Yolanda Simon

These are:

1. Strengthening the Institutional Response to HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean – SIRHASC, an EU-funded, CARICOM-executed project. This project has signaled the transformation that is taking place in CRN+ and has enabled us to acquire permanent offices, operational and salary support for three staff members technical assistance for the CRN+ strategic planning process and financial and technical support for the development of six national PLWHA networks.
2. CDC- Institutional Strengthening - a five year grant which provides support for two additional staff positions i.e. a Financial Officer and an IT officer, as well as support to strengthen and develop a comprehensive accounting system and the development of the CRN+ website.
3. International HIV/AIDS Alliance – a two-year grant to develop CRN+'s

communication strategy. This grant provides support for one additional staff position i.e. a Communications/ Information Officer, as well as technical and financial support to develop a communications strategy among the six national networks. This project also provides financial support for advocacy workshops with in the PLWHA networks.

4. The World Bank - with the CARICOM Secretariat as the conduit: a US 9 million dollar grant has recently been signed between both institutions. Contained within the overall grant agreements are sub grants for CAREC, UWI and CRN+. In the context of CRN+ this was made possible by negotiations between the Bank and CRN+, which began in 2002. This has resulted in the approval of CRN+' three-year proposal. We will soon be entering into discussions with PANCAP as we seek to access this grant.

Of interest to note is that CRN+ took the bold step to submit a proposal for funding to the forth round of the Global Fund for AIDSTB and Malaria – GFATM. This was made possible with financial support from the UK Alliance as well as technical support from UWI – HEU St. Augustine, UNDP and UNAIDS. Whatever the

outcome, the experience was invaluable. We will know the results of our efforts soon as the GFATM Board will meet 28-30 June. Keep your fingers crossed!!!

This leads me into my final bit of good news. We are on track with our strategic plan. The focus of the two-year operational plan 2003-2004 is empowerment and development. This theme is consistent with the CRN+ strategic priorities of quality representation (advocacy) of PLWHA in the Caribbean, improving and expanding the delivery of services to PLWHA in the region and capacity building at all levels of the organization. We have reviewed and revised the network's constitution as well as conducted structural and operational audits in several of the national networks. Now that the Secretariat has been strengthened (from 2 volunteers to 6 staff member) we can turn our attention to the core of CRN+ i.e. the strengthening and development of the national PLWHA networks. We have also developed several charters which will govern the way we work. This we will unveil at our Annual Capacity Building Workshop and AGM in October 2004.

Stay tuned for more GOOD NEWS... ■

In Solidarity and Strength,  
Yolanda Simon

### Editor's Note:

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