

TALKING POINTS

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LAUNCH OF REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN USAID AND MOTHERS2MOTHERS (m2m) UNDER USAID'S NEW SOUTHERN AFRICA REGIONAL HIV/AIDS PROGRAM (RHAP)

JANUARY 23, 2013

TALKING POINTS:

- I am happy to be here at the launch of a regional partnership between the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and mothers2mothers.
- The United States has a long history of partnerships around the world which support communities to overcome their struggles against poverty and to create a better life. I believe that the American people's compassion is embodied through our work at USAID.
- In Swaziland, and across Southern Africa, USAID focuses primarily on addressing HIV and AIDS and other health risks, and that is why we are here today.
- As many of you know, development is not easy and it takes time. After many years of working in this field, I have learned that some key principles are crucial to effective development, especially in the context of addressing HIV and AIDS:
 1. First, evidence and experience shows that our best investment is in strengthening local organizations so that they can stand securely on their own. This enables the affected countries to assume full responsibility to implement programs among their own people as the 'owners' of their future. USAID's commitment to building the capacity of local organizations is part of an initiative called "USAID Forward".
 2. Second, as development partners, we must continue to focus on women, girls, and gender equity if we want to achieve our development objectives. In Swaziland, like in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, women are disproportionately affected by HIV and AIDS. Yet women are also leading the fight against HIV. Putting women at the center of our development programs just makes sense.
- m2m and its Mentor Mothers, exemplifies these two principles:
 - [As you have heard], m2m employs and trains HIV positive mothers from the community to support other mothers to prevent HIV transmission to their

babies. These Mentor Mothers are able to draw on their experience and skills and provide much needed educational and psychosocial support.

- As a local regional organization, m2m empowers women in Africa to, in turn, empower their sisters to apply African solutions that have proven to be effective in reducing HIV transmission.
- Today, I am proud to be part of the launch of the RISE Project – which stands for Mentor Mothers “Reducing Infections through Support and Education”. Through our partnership with m2m, USAID will apply funding from the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief [PEPFAR] to support this indigenous organization to scale-up a model that has proven to be an important tool to prevent HIV transmission.
- We are launching the project in Swaziland, and are excited to report expansion plans into Lesotho, Botswana, Kenya, and most likely other countries in East and Southern Africa. While m2m has worked in many of these countries in the past, this agreement represents our first regional level partnership between m2m and USAID.
- This new agreement will allow m2m to expand some of the best aspects of its model. For instance, our agreement enables m2m to help even more women in their home communities, and increase the involvement of men and other important family members – such as grandmothers –who often influence decisions in the family. The agreement will support referrals and education on TB, cervical cancer and gender base violence – issues that are unfortunately all too familiar, yet insufficiently addressed, in the region.

USAID and m2m will also use this new agreement to assess the overall activities of the m2m model and to [scientifically] determine which components work best and why. We hope to use this much-needed evidence to work with governments to eventually incorporate this locally-grown model into their own health systems. In fact, through this new agreement, the USAID mission in Kenya is already planning the next steps for incorporating Mentor Mothers into the Kenya national health system. We are excited to learn from this experience and hope to replicate it in other countries.

- In conclusion let me reiterate the importance of our partnership with m2m: m2m is a local, African, home-grown organization that has devised a winning program to halt the killer spread of HIV from mother to baby. M2m puts women at the center of its solutions. Our regional partnership is a powerful way of investing American resources to build and sustain local capacity to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV in Africa.
- Thank you