

Countries of the region consider using June 27 as HIV Testing and Counseling Awareness Day

In the last few years, **June 27th** has been used as a day to promote HIV testing and counseling. The celebration arose in 1994 in the United States, as an initiative of the North American Association of People with HIV/AIDS (NAPWA). After the success of this action, other institutions such as the CDC, Kaiser Family Foundation and MTV have joined in promoting of the date.

In the Region of the Americas some countries are considering adopting **June 27** as a day to motivate the population to learn about the HIV testing and counseling services. In recent months the subject was discussed in the Inter-American Commission of Women, an OAS agency, at a Central American meeting of heads of HIV programs, and also by some HIV programs in the Southern Cone. The PAHO Secretariat, through the HIV Unit, is available to support countries who want to engage in this activity. In addition, we believe that the adoption of this date throughout the region will allow for a greater synergy and impact on the Organization's member countries.

The idea is to use **June 27th** as an opportunity for awareness and reflection, similar to World AIDS Day and other dates. It is important to mention that PAHO is not promoting massive testing throughout region on this date. Countries that favor this option, including the United States, need to ensure that they have adequate physical and human resources to cope with the demand.

Due to the proximity of **27 June 2007**, interested countries may consider carrying out actions that can create interest of the news media and generate expectations around the June 27 celebration in the coming years. Other possible activities include distribution of information packages on the essential features of services (informed consent, counseling and confidentiality) and reaching out to vulnerable populations in order to promote services.

The promotion of the date **June 27th** is part of PAHO's "Know Your Status Initiative", which proposes to strengthen and expand the HIV testing and counseling services through a group of communication initiatives. The Initiative uses as frame of reference the *Regional Guide of HIV Test and Advisory Services*^{*}, a conceptual, methodological and operational tool that integrates the policies, recommendations, strategies, and recent technological advances at the global and regional level in the field of the HIV testing and counseling services. The Initiative also includes other tools that will become available during 2007.

(*)Two different sets guidelines are currently under development, one for Latin America and one for the Caribbean.