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## STORIES FROM THE FIELD

# Businesses Unite to Confront Stigma

**Jamaica Business Council on HIV/AIDS will coordinate the private sector response to HIV**



PHOTO CREDIT: VIN MCKAY

*“The Jamaica council will engage business leaders across the region and throughout the hemisphere as part of a wider business response that will be both good for the people and economic development.”*

*—Rodney Davis, Chairman of JaBCHA and President and CEO of Cable & Wireless Jamaica, Ltd.*

KINGSTON | Twenty-one private sector companies committed to adopting HIV workplace programs at the launch of the Jamaica Business Council on HIV/AIDS (JaBCHA) on September 20, 2006.

“All of these companies have made the commitment that where they do not already have written policies on HIV/AIDS, they will be establishing these within a short while from now,” said Audrey Hinchcliffe, president of the Jamaica Employer’s Federation (JEF). “This will be greatly effective in reducing the incidence of discrimination and stigma that is unfortunately still practiced against persons living with HIV/AIDS ...”

JEF led local efforts to form the council. JaBCHA is supported with technical and financial assistance through Task Order 1 of the USAID | Health Policy Initiative. Merck also provided support by funding a baseline HIV/AIDS at the Workplace Survey in early 2006. The survey found that 62 percent of the 23 companies surveyed did not have HIV-specific policies and that program managers were eager for assistance in creating stigma-free workplaces. These findings informed the establishment of the business council.

JaBCHA’s mission is to coordinate a Jamaican business response to mitigate the impact of the HIV epidemic by adopting workplace policy, prevention, and treatment strategies and to remove HIV-related stigma and discrimination within the workplace.

At the launch on September 20, CEOs and senior representatives from 21 Jamaican companies signed the Constitution. In joining the council, members commit to implement an HIV workplace policy, participate at the annual conference to report on progress in furthering the JaBCHA mission, and sign a corporate values statement that states: “Our company is committed to eradicating HIV-related stigma and discrimination in our workplace.”

The newly-elected Executive Committee, led by Cable & Wireless Jamaica’s President, Rodney S. Davis, is currently in the process of developing an operating framework, budget, and annual workplan.

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The 21 founding members of JaBCHA, which span several sectors of the Jamaican economy, include:

- Bank of Nova Scotia
- Cable & Wireless
- Capital & Credit Financial Group
- Cari-Med
- Carreras Group
- CitiGroup
- COK Co-operative Credit Union
- Grace Kennedy
- Guardian Life Insurance
- Island Grill
- Jamaica Broilers Group
- Jamaica National Building Society
- Jamaica Pegasus Hotel
- LASCO Group of Companies
- Life of Jamaica
- Manpower Maintenance Services
- National Commercial Bank Jamaica
- Paymaster Jamaica
- Red Stripe Diageo
- Restaurant Associates
- Walkerswood Caribbean Foods

The formation of JaBCHA builds on USAID's efforts to mobilize the private sector response to HIV across the Latin American and Caribbean region. The USAID | Health Policy Initiative and the AIDS Responsibility Project also helped to form and continue to provide technical assistance to the National Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS in Mexico, which was successfully launched in 2004.