

Caribbean AIDS Fight Gets A Boost

A \$100 million grant from the U.S. government to help fight AIDS in the Caribbean has been pledged to leaders in the region.

Acting U.S. Ambassador in Guyana Karen Williams says the agreement will provide funds over the next five years to treat people in a dozen CARICOM nations, including Suriname, the Bahamas and Belize. Williams said Tuesday that countries can start to request funds next month from the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the main U.S. program for international AIDS programs. The Caribbean has the second highest AIDS infection rate outside of sub-Saharan Africa. At the end of 2008, an estimated 240,000 people were living with HIV and AIDS in the Caribbean. Some 20,000 people were newly infected during 2008, and there were 12,000 deaths due to AIDS. In two countries in this region - the Bahamas and Haiti - more than 2 percent of the adult population is living with HIV. Half of adults living with the virus are women. AIDS is now one of the leading causes of death in some of these countries, with Haiti being the worst affected. An estimated 7,500 lives are lost each year to AIDS in Haiti, and thousands of children have been orphaned by the epidemic.