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barefoot WORKSHOPS

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**World AIDS Orphans Day Brings Together Top  
Policymakers, Funders and Broadcasters**

Johannesburg, South Africa, May 5th, 2007 -

On Monday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006 at 3:30 p.m., the UN Mission in New York City US will host a one-hour exclusive videoconference and screening between top policymakers, funders and broadcasters at the US State Department in Washington DC and US Consulate in Johannesburg, to discuss the role that "participatory media" can play in combating HIV/AIDS.

The videoconference and screening is a project of Barefoot Workshops, a New York-based nonprofit organization that specializes in producing media projects for organizations and individuals in the developing world.

Monday's event is the culmination of a ten-day workshop, called, "True Life Stories: Girls Speak Out!", orchestrated by Barefoot Workshops in Soweto, South Africa, to teach eight orphaned girls, ages 13-17 years old from the organization, NOAH (Nurturing Orphans of AIDS for Humanity), how to use media to better inform policymakers of the realities of their lives.

The DVC will be produced in partnership with the The President's Digital Freedom Initiative (DFI), and will bridge together more than fifty diverse stakeholders in Johannesburg, New York City and Washington DC – among them PEPFAR, USAID (Global Health Office), Lovelife, SoulCity, Africare, eTV (South Africa), Corporate Council on Africa, RFK Center for Human Rights, UN Works Programme, Global Action for Children and National Geographic.

The President's Digital Freedom Initiative (DFI) aims to harness the strengths of the US public and private sectors to help the developing world utilize information and communication technologies (ICTs) to resolve development challenges.

**DATE:** Monday May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007 (World AIDS Orphans Day)

**TIME:** 10am – 11am

**LOCATION:** United Nations 140 East 45 Street, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor, New York, NY.

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**PLEASE BRING IDENTIFICATION CARD. Arrive not later than 8:30am to clear security. For each participant, we will need full name, date of birth, driver's license number if US citizen or passport number if non-US citizen.**

"This event will encourage international dialogue about how media can be used to shape policymakers understanding of HIV/AIDS from a 'first hand' perspective- and lead to improved outcomes," says Thomas Carnegie, Director of Telecommunication and IT Policy for Africa at

the U.S. Department of State, "South Africa is the first example."

Although Sub-Saharan Africa houses just 10 percent of the world's population, the region is home to more than 60 percent of all people living with HIV. The situation of youth is particularly startling, with more than 20 million orphans in sub-Saharan expected by the year 2010. Every 15 seconds, a child loses a parent to AIDS.

"The Barefoot model is 'participatory' – meaning it puts cameras into the hands of those who are directly affected by an issue," says Alison Fast, Program Director for Barefoot Workshops, an organization whose past projects include work with Dalit women in India and natural disaster victims in Latin America and the United States.

"Media has a role to play in combating HIV/AIDS, not only through advertisements and campaigns, but through projects like "Girls Speak Out!", that give girls the power to mentor and support each other by using their experience as a form of therapy for others."

"The objective of this project, 'True Life Stories: Girls Speak Out!' is to give the girls a voice," says NOAH Ark Manager, Kate Radebe, "and to help them overcome issues of low self-esteem that lead to risky behavior."

"We would like to see these videos integrated into a media library," indicates Fast, "that supports peer education, counseling and support services for girls."

"Girls are the future of this country, and deserve to be recognized," says one of the participants of "Girls Speak Out!", 17-year-old Giveness Webeke, "We are the flowers of the future."