

Vital Voices and Bank of America Host Mentoring Program in Johannesburg to Empower Women Leaders Fighting HIV/AIDS

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Vital Voices Global Partnership and Bank of America today launched a weeklong initiative in Johannesburg, South Africa, connecting women leaders from sub-Saharan Africa engaged in business, social enterprise and NGOs who are actively working to fight HIV/AIDS, to senior women executives from the private sector and civil society who will lend their expertise through mentoring to help the women advance their objectives.

The [Global Ambassadors Program](#) (GAP), which previously took place in Cape Town, South Africa in 2012, includes one-on-one mentoring sessions between mentors ("Global Ambassadors") and mentees, group mentoring, and targeted trainings to build organizational management acumen. In this unique iteration of the program, Global Ambassadors and mentees share a connection to (RED), an organization founded in 2006 to raise money and awareness for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Many of the Global Ambassadors are from partner (RED) companies, and the mentees – from Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania and Uganda – are actively working in businesses, social enterprises or clinics which focus on fighting HIV/AIDS, or provide economic opportunities to those living with HIV/AIDS.

The program's focus on empowering women leaders in the fight against HIV/AIDS comes as the world reaches a tipping point in the battle, with 2013 marking the first time that more people newly accessed treatment than were newly infected with HIV¹. More than two-thirds of the 35 million people living with HIV/AIDS are in sub-Saharan Africa², and the high prevalence of the pandemic in the region has a negative impact on economic growth: it's been estimated that sub-Saharan African countries lose roughly one percent in GDP on account of the high disease burden³.

"Bringing the Global Ambassadors Program back to South Africa, in collaboration with (RED), speaks to the power of partnerships to drive social change," said Anne Finucane, global chief strategy and marketing officer at Bank of America. "Providing these women on the frontlines of the fight against HIV/AIDS access to an impressive group of mentors and a leading global nonprofit will broaden their impact for years to come."

The program will include a site visit to an HIV/AIDS clinic, enabling Global Ambassadors and mentees to see first-hand how support in the HIV/AIDS sector is making an impact on the community. To extend the dialogue around women's economic empowerment, the week will also include "Africa Rising. Women Leading" – a forum which will convene experts and thought leaders to explore the role of women in advancing economic and social progress in Africa, particularly in the context of global health and the digital revolution.

"We know now, as we hold our tenth Global Ambassadors Program, this one in Johannesburg, that this critical work of mentoring has a positive multiplier effect," said Alyse Nelson, president and CEO of Vital Voices. "We're proud this week to help empower women leaders in business, social enterprise and nonprofit work in the fight against HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. We see this work as advancing global progress, particularly this year as the global community builds a new framework for gender equality and empowering women and girls in the post-2015 agenda."

Ten Global Ambassadors (mentors) will be paired with mentees.

The mentors are:

- Antonia Ashton, vice president of communications, SAP Africa
- Titi Cole, retail products and underwriting executive, Bank of America
- Deborah Dugan, CEO, (RED)
- Yvonne Ike, managing director, head of sub-Saharan Africa (excl.-RSA), Bank of America Merrill Lynch
- Katy Knox, managing director and head of Business Banking, Bank of America Merrill Lynch
- Linda Mafu, head of political and civil society advocacy, The Global Fund
- Kathleen Matthews, executive vice president and chief global communications and public affairs officer, Marriott International, Inc.
- Dr. Siphosiso Moyo, Africa executive director, The ONE Campaign
- Lily Neumeyer, vice president of programming, A&E Networks
- Cathy Steen, senior vice president, business development, Belvedere Vodka

The mentees are:

- Laura Akunga, founder and CEO, Benchmark Solutions Limited (Kenya)
- Agnes Atim Apea, CEO, Hope Development Initiative (Uganda)
- Kogie Govender, owner and manager, Express Employment Professionals (South Africa)

- Feven Haddis, Deputy CEO and global communications manager, Hamlin Fistula (Ethiopia)
- Dr. Victoria Kisyombe, managing director, SELFINA (Tanzania)
- Mary G. Mbukpa, territorial manager, Society for Family Health (Nigeria)
- Joyce Mbwette, managing director, Footloose Tanzania Ltd. (Tanzania)
- Sbusisiwe Myeni, CEO, Imbeleko, Dr. Seni Myeni Foundation (South Africa)
- Lebo Ramafoko, CEO, Soul City Institute (South Africa)
- Philippa Thome, creative director, Gone Rural (Swaziland)

The confirmed public forum speakers include:

- Bola Adesola, managing director and CEO, Standard Chartered Bank Nigeria Ltd.
- Regina Agyare, founder and CEO, Soronko Solutions Limited
- Patricia Amira, host, The Patricia Show
- Antonia Ashton, vice president of communications, SAP Africa
- Deborah Dugan, CEO, (RED)
- Yvonne Ike, head of sub-Saharan Africa (excl.-RSA), Bank of America Merrill Lynch
- Kathleen Matthews, executive vice president and chief global communications and public affairs officer, Marriott International, Inc.
- Audrey Muthupi, CEO, SystemicLogic Group
- Dr. Siphso S. Moyo, Africa executive director, ONE
- Sbusisiwe Myeni, CEO, Imbeleko, Dr. Seni Myeni Foundation
- Annette Muller, founder and CEO, DOTNXT
- Ory Okolloh, director of investments, Omidyar Network; co-founder, Ushahidi, member of ONE's Africa Policy Advisory Board
- Hema Vallabh, founder and CEO, The Passionate Professional; co-founder, WomenEng (South Africa)

The Global Ambassadors Program is part of Bank of America's and Vital Voices' ongoing commitment to investing in women's leadership development, a goal guided by the belief that strong leaders are important to healthy, vibrant communities including advancing economic growth. Over time, mentors help their mentees develop critical communications, advocacy and business skills and strategies to advance their work. Since 2012, mentoring programs have been held in Poland, Northern Ireland, Mexico, Qatar, Singapore, Brazil, India, South Africa, and Haiti, reaching women from 33 countries. Future locations will be announced this year.

For more information on the Global Ambassadors Program, visit www.bankofamerica.com/globalambassadors.

¹ UNAIDS, [UNAIDS report](#) shows that 19 million of the 35 million people living with HIV today do not know that they have the virus

² UNAIDS, [Fact Sheet 2014](#)

³ World Health Organization, [Trade, foreign policy, diplomacy and health](#)

Vital Voices

Vital Voices Global Partnership is a leading non-governmental organization that identifies, invests in and brings visibility to extraordinary women around the world by unleashing their leadership potential to transform lives and accelerate peace and prosperity in their communities. Founded by former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in 1997, the organization trains and mentors women leaders as agents of transformative change in economic development, human rights and political participation. The Vital Voices Global Leadership Network includes more than 14,000 leaders representing 144 countries who have trained and mentored 500,000 additional women and girls in their communities. Visit www.vitalvoices.org to learn more.

Bank of America

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Reporters May Contact:

Margaux Bergen, Vital Voices, 1.202.333.1928
margauxbergen@vitalvoices.org

Fiona Hill, Bank of America, 1.980.322.7631
fiona.a.hill@bankofamerica.com

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