

Remarks
Ambassador D. Brent Hardt
to the
Guyana Business Coalition on HIV AIDS Awards for Business Excellence
Friday, June 29, 2012
Herdmanston Lodge, Queenstown

Dr. Bheri Ramsaran, Minister of Health,
Mr. David Bhola, Chairperson of the Guyana Business Coalition on HIV
and AIDS,
Representatives of the Guyana Business Coalition,
Representatives of member organizations,
Representatives of international organizations,
Friends all.

On behalf of the United States Government and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), I am very pleased to be a part of this important forum in support of the Guyana HIV/AIDS response. There is no doubt that the United States Government, working in partnership with the Government of Guyana and the private sector, has made significant strides in the fight against HIV and AIDS. Together we have improved the lives of thousands of Guyanese living with, affected by, or vulnerable to HIV.

The private sector's welcome engagement on this initiative began under the USAID/Guyana HIV/AIDS Reduction and Prevention Program (GHARP 1). The program joined with the International Labor Organization (ILO) and local NGOs to build the capacity of private sector partners in drafting and implementing workplace HIV/AIDS policies and in building the capacity of focal point persons within their workforces to conduct HIV awareness sessions.

USAID/GHARP supported the formation of the Private Sector Advisory Board (2006-2008), which later became the Guyana Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS (May 2008). The GBCHA is now a robust 47-member body operating across a variety of sectors (agro-processing, construction, mining and logging, hospitality and tourism, media, financial services, shipping and textiles) and plays a critical role in efforts to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS.

As many of you know, after meeting the emergency response to Guyana's HIV/AIDS epidemic by providing nearly \$175 million in assistance under PEPFAR over the past decade, we are now in a phase in

which we are beginning a transition to a sustainable, technical assistance model, while reducing the number of partners we support. It is truly reassuring to see that, despite not being able to support the Business Coalition since March 2012, the Private Sector did not disappoint and has continued to leverage resources to sustain its prevention programs. The Coalition boasts of testing the highest number of clients of any counseling and testing site in Guyana, with over 2,500 persons tested annually. It continues to implement the workplace program and provide technical assistance on policy development.

Beyond the workplace, resources are leveraged for the National Food Bank and community based organizations care and support activities. I understand that the Coalition recently celebrated its fourth anniversary, which highlighted the ongoing and sustained involvement of the private sector. Congratulations on another year of vital support to the common good. This is vivid testimony to the commitment of corporate leaders and to the progress made by the local and international programs over the years. I believe this example has paved the way for more sustained country owned programs in the months and years ahead.

Let me take this opportunity to commend the board of directors and staff of the Guyana Business Coalition for recognizing that optimal use can be made of the resources available from different donors to create an integrated and comprehensive approach that truly serves the people of Guyana.

Tonight, as the United States Government joins the Guyana Business Coalition and the National AIDS Program to once again recognize its members who have demonstrated a strong and continuing commitment to their employees' and communities' health and wellbeing, we are proud to have provided an impetus for the foundation of the Business Coalition. We join in celebrating the strength of the coalition members, and look forward to their leadership going forward to ensure a better and brighter future for all Guyanese.