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AJWS media clippings for the Overbrook Foundation

AJWS offers numerous opportunities for skilled professionals to work abroad in the developing world. One retired couple that has volunteered with us extensively was recently featured in an online feature of AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) magazine. Attached is the article; readers can go online to access an exciting interactive map of the couple's journeys.

Please see article: **“At Home in the World: The Adventures of Stan and Marcia” (AARP, November 2006)**, and visit <http://www.aarpmagazine.org/people/stanandmarcia.html>

Thanks in part to the generous support of the Overbrook Foundation, AJWS has supported numerous grassroots organizations in South Africa that support access, treatment, and education of people living with HIV/AIDS. One of our grantees, the Treatment Action Campaign, was recently featured in a New York Times article on South Africa and AIDS.

Please see: **“Under Fire, South Africa Shakes Up Its Strategy Against AIDS” (New York Times, November 2, 2006).**

In the past several months, our advocacy work has centered on Darfur and the deployment of a U.N. peacekeeping force in this region. AJWS was a main organizer of the “Rally to Save Darfur Now: Voices to End Genocide” at Central Park in New York City on Sunday, September 17.

Please see: **“Jews once again lead call to end the crisis in Darfur” (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, September 18, 2006).**

Another AJWS grantee, the Girl Child Network of Zimbabwe, was recently awarded the first-ever UNDP Red Ribbon Award at the XVI International AIDS Conference in Toronto.

Please see: **“AJWS Grantee Wins First-Ever UNDP Red Ribbon Award (InterAction press release, August 16, 2006).**

AJWS President Ruth Messinger appeared in the New York Times' Week in Review in a letter commenting on child labor in Africa.

Please see: **“Forced Labor in Africa” (New York Times, November 5, 2006).**



Web Exclusive...

At Home in the World: The Adventures of Stan & Marcia

By Stan Klein, November 2006

Many retirees travel, but few actually sell their home and become globetrotters for good. Meet a couple who did just that, helping others as they go



My wife, Marcia, hates when people ask her where we live. You'd think this would be an easy question to answer. But in fact, it's rather complicated. We don't really live anywhere. Or rather, we live *everywhere*. When we retired in 1997, at age 60, we sold our house in suburban Connecticut, disposed of nearly all our belongings, and we have been traveling the globe ever since. We're living on a shoestring budget, but our experiences are priceless, as we spend much of our time doing volunteer work and meeting the people in the countries we visit.

It actually started for us at age 55. I was in real estate, mainly urban revitalization, and Marcia was a social worker, which she'd been for most of our married life. When my business flattened out, we decided to use what was left of our savings and do something we'd always dreamt about—take a trip around the world. Our daughters were grown, one living in North Carolina and one in New Mexico. We felt that we had paid our dues as "solid citizens" who had led a life of responsibility, and now it was time to discover the next phase of our lives.

More On This Story



Video

[Clips from an interview with Stan & Marcia](#)



FAQs

[Learn how they pack, plan, stay healthy, and more](#)

We had what we hoped would be enough money to sustain us for about a year if we traveled backpacker-style on a tight budget. With our house rented and two one-way tickets to Japan in hand, we set off for what turned out to be a two-year adventure, as our money went much further than we had expected. (We spent only about \$12,000 that first year, including transportation.) The journey took us westward beyond Japan to Southeast Asia, India, Nepal, China, Africa, and, finally, Mexico, where we house-sat for four months. Along the way, we stayed in youth hostels and budget hotels, as well as with local families, traveling second class at a pace that suited us, without advance reservations or hard plans. After a nice, middle-class life tied to careers and raising children, with mortgages and car payments, this was a new sense of freedom for us.

We learned so much on this trip, about ourselves and the world we live in. All those possessions we had accumulated throughout the years suddenly seemed less valuable. Comfort became less of a priority, and the rewards of the trade-off were greater than we had expected. Prior to this trip, we had stayed at good hotels with fancy lobbies, where guests remained at arm's distance and minded their own business (and where I'd call down to the front desk if my pillow wasn't soft enough). But now, staying in simple youth hostels, we joined our fellow backpackers—many of them half our age—in endless discussions about where to go and what to see, and how to find cheap transportation and reasonable accommodations. This often led to the exchange of ideas and life dreams, and other meaningful conversations. Marcia and I were delighted to find that we were very popular, almost like parental figures for some of these young people far from home. They were surprised by the choice we'd made to do what we were doing, and we often heard, "Gee, I wish my folks would do something like that."

We met more new and different people in this two-year period and had more new experiences than at any other time in our lives. Seeing the Taj Mahal was a treat, but the connections we made with like-minded travelers made the experience that much more memorable. And perhaps even more special were our homestays with local families, arranged through [People to People International](#) and [Servas International](#), which gave us glimpses of real life in the countries we visited. That set the stage for what was to come.

By the end of the two-year trip, Marcia and I knew what we wanted to do: retire and live a simpler life that included much more travel and greater opportunities to immerse ourselves in other cultures. We put our heads together and outlined a plan. We needed to save, so instead of moving back into our mortgage-heavy home, we continued to rent it and looked into house-sitting opportunities. Searching through the classified ads in our

local paper, we found several people looking for responsible long-term house-sitters, and with our grey hair, solid résumés, and years of experience as homeowners, we found ourselves in demand. It was pretty amazing: while others paid us to live in our house, we stayed rent-free in someone else's home 10 miles up the road. We both returned to work and began saving as much as we could.

Being frugal became a great game for us. Every dime we saved brought us closer to our dream. We were surprised by how much less we could live on and how many things we used to buy that were unnecessary. We stopped spending money on meals at mediocre restaurants, for example, and kept to the bare essentials. We had assumed that living a more budget-conscious life would be one of the sacrifices we would have to make; instead, it was turning out to be one of the benefits. We were really much happier when we stopped spending. It meant we would be free that much sooner.

Three years later, we were ready for the next phase of our plan: rid ourselves of most of our possessions and sell our house. At this point, we felt not just financially but emotionally prepared to embark on our retirement journey, having had enough time to mull over the essential questions: How would we adjust to our new lifestyle? Would we feel too distant from our daughters, our grandson, and other loved ones? Would we be happy living out of a backpack? There were a lot of unknowns, but we'd already had a taste of life on the road and were excited about our decision.

It took several weeks to go through our belongings—furniture, artwork, books, clothing, appliances, etc. This was a catharsis for us. We priced everything carefully so that our giant garage sale would be successful. Initial despair evolved to a point where we couldn't stop laughing. That wonderful Eames chair that was so expensive was still beautiful, but 30 years had certainly aged it. My favorite leather jacket was not nearly as new as I'd thought it was. The onyx coffee table we'd spent six months picking out wasn't so pretty after all. What an eye-opener it was, taking a realistic look at all those "treasures" of ours.

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We each had a few things we hated to part with. For me, it was my motorcycle and mechanic's tools. For Marcia, it was all the memorabilia—scraps of material from dresses she'd sewn for our daughters, the kids' childhood drawings and all the cards they'd made for us, our photo albums—much of which we wound up storing in a friend's attic.

Before we started selling things, we invited our children, nieces, and nephews to take what they wanted. Then a few special pieces went to dealers. Our weekend-long garage sale took care of most everything else. It was a wonderful process.

A few days later, we closed on the sale of our house. We left the attorney's office with a fat check in hand and two backpacks—a "his" and a "hers." Off we went in our two cars,

one going to each of our daughters. We delivered the cars and said our farewells before going to the airport for the initial flight to Africa and the first leg of our new life.

We had realized that as enjoyable as our first trip was, essentially we were tourists, seeing the sights and tasting the food, but rarely getting involved with the locals, except for the few families we'd met during our homestays. So this time, we had reached out to a nongovernmental agency, [American Jewish World Service](#) (AJWS), which would place us as volunteers in different locations, and we planned to stay with a lot more host families.

Our first stop was Zimbabwe, where shortly after arrival we began a three-month AJWS assignment with a grass-roots agency called the Organization of Rural Associations for Progress (ORAP). Suddenly, there we were in Bulawayo, a part of the life and among the people. We became totally immersed in our work. Marcia started with grant writing and later branched out to teaching grant writing, working with the unit engaged in microcredit financing, and reorganizing ORAP's library. My assignment was to help people start small businesses, but I soon saw where the agency's greatest need was and began supervising and reorganizing its construction department. I helped get it back on its feet, trained a young man to take over as department head after my departure, and within three months we saw it turn a profit. Having originally been skeptical about what I could do as a volunteer, I was surprised to find how much I was able to help by using many of the skills from my working life. It was challenging and immensely rewarding—and just the start.

The lifestyle that has emerged in our retirement is satisfying to us both. We have become citizens of the world and yet have maintained close ties with our loved ones, thanks in part to the widespread availability of e-mail. A pattern that agrees with us has taken shape. We spend some time each year in the United States, visiting friends and family—going to our grandson's school to be his "show-and-tell," and tending to tax returns and medical checkups. We house-sit in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, five or six months a year, taking classes, doing volunteer work, reconnecting with friends. The rest of our time is devoted to travel and volunteering. We have had AJWS placements in South Africa, West Africa, India, and South America, and are looking forward to the next one, wherever that may be. We also have stayed with many wonderful host families both in the United States and abroad.

Right now this is a balanced and meaningful life. But who knows? For us, everything is subject to change, and we can go anywhere at a moment's notice. There are so many options, so long as we continue to keep ourselves unencumbered.

November 3, 2006

Under Fire, South Africa Shakes Up Its Strategy Against AIDS

By MICHAEL WINES

Departing from years of indecision and, on occasion, denial, South Africa's government is considering a new and sweeping assault on an AIDS pandemic that already includes one in eight of the world's H.I.V. infections.

Every day, 1,000 South Africans are infected with H.I.V., and 800 more are killed by AIDS, the government says. With that backdrop, the deputy minister of health, Noziza Madlala-Routledge, said in an interview on Thursday that a new AIDS strategy to be announced in December might include proposals to broaden the distribution of life-saving antiretroviral drugs, remedy the shortage of health care workers and improve treatment of H.I.V.-positive pregnant women.

The new strategy will be overseen by a restructured national AIDS council charged with halving the number of new H.I.V. infections by 2011.

The issues top a list of what AIDS activists and nongovernmental experts have long called serious shortcomings in the government's AIDS program. In a striking departure from the past, government officials are drafting the plan in close consultation with those same critics, who have long been all but excluded from past considerations.

Ms. Madlala-Routledge said critics "have identified blind spots" that the government, preoccupied with building a new nation, had missed.

"We've definitely reached a turning point in our country, with civil society and government working in concert," Ms. Madlala-Routledge said. "We recognize that the campaign against AIDS needs all of us."

Experts and activists outside the government said they were heartened by the government's new approach, but would wait to see what new programs were announced and how vigorously they would be carried out.

"I don't think we're popping the Champagne corks quite yet," Jonathan Berger, who directs the AIDS Law Project at the University of the Witwatersrand, said this week.

"There are still going to be, on certain key issues, quite significant differences of opinion."

The most important change, he said, may be that the two sides are now talking seriously about how to resolve those differences.

Practically, the signal change may be that the government's lightning-rod health minister, Dr. Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, has been sidelined from day-to-day control of AIDS policy.

President Thabo Mbeki ordered the current deputy president, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, to oversee a cabinet-level review of AIDS policies in September, saying the AIDS crisis "is bigger than any individual, minister or department."

Soon afterward, Dr. Tshabalala-Msimang entered a hospital for a respiratory infection, and little has been heard from her since. Her deputy, Ms. Madlala-Routledge, has taken over AIDS issues for the ministry.

To many here, Dr. Tshabalala-Msimang's fall from grace is proof of democratic pressures at work. Mr. Mbeki, who once questioned the scientific link between H.I.V. and AIDS, fell silent on the issue years ago after being internationally criticized. Until now, Dr. Tshabalala-Msimang was the public face of his government's AIDS policies.

An unrelenting advocate of vitamin and nutritional defenses against H.I.V., the virus that causes AIDS, she has been widely derided for calling antiretrovirals "poison" and for advocating a diet heavy in garlic, beetroot and other traditional remedies to forestall AIDS. Under her tenure, the government resisted giving pregnant women drugs to reduce the transmission of H.I.V. to fetuses until it was forced by a court order.

The government has since begun mass distribution of anti-AIDS drugs at major hospitals. But the slow pace of that rollout and Dr. Tshabalala-Msimang's resistance to drug therapies have ballooned into political issues here, where one in nine South Africans -- and one in four adults -- is infected with H.I.V.

The discontent became evident this year within the African National Congress, the dominant political party, when Parliament's chief whip urged Mr. Mbeki to work "intimately" with AIDS activists in the interest of millions of H.I.V.-positive citizens. And it bubbled over last August at an international AIDS conference in Toronto, where South Africa's national exhibit, featuring baskets of garlic and beetroot, shocked many.

The United Nations' special envoy to Africa on AIDS, Stephen Lewis, denounced the country's AIDS policies as "worthy of a lunatic fringe" before 20,000 delegates at the conference. At the same time, 81 international scientists sent Mr. Mbeki a petition urging him to dismiss Dr. Tshabalala-Msimang.

Since the Toronto conference, AIDS activists and experts say, the government's position has undergone a sea change. Last weekend, the deputy president and the deputy health minister were the marquee speakers at a Johannesburg conference of AIDS activists and public interest groups; both called for a united assault on AIDS.

South Africa's Treatment Action Campaign, an organization of 20,000 mostly H.I.V.-positive AIDS activists, has been by far the most vocal critic of the government's programs. In an interview from Cape Town on Thursday, the group's general secretary, Siphso Mthathi, said there was now "a growing enthusiasm, across the board, around the possibility of what we can do as a country in a united fashion" to combat the pandemic.



Jewish Telegraphic Agency



Jacob Berkman

Tens of thousands of demonstrators gather in New York on Sept. 17 to call on the international community to help end the crisis in Darfur.

**Jews once again lead call
to end the crisis in Darfur**

By Jacob Berkman

NEW YORK, Sept. 18 (JTA) — The Jewish presence was again large, as an estimated 30,000 demonstrators gathered in Central Park here on Sunday calling on the international community to help end the crisis in Darfur.

“All the sides in the Darfur conflict are predominantly Muslim. But this is not about politics, this is about people,” former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told the crowd.

“We need to tell the United Nations that this is what it is here for. And President Bush has to make it clear to the United Nations that the United Nations has to get in there.”

Albright was among 30 speakers issuing similar statements at the park on Save Darfur Day, when protests took place in more than 80 cities around the world — including in Cairo and Jerusalem and Khartoum, Sudan.

The rallies were aimed at persuading the United Nations to deploy to the Sudan the peacekeeping forces it promised this summer.

An estimated 200,000 to 400,000 people have been killed in the western region of the Sudan since 2003, when the Sudanese government enlisted Janjaweed militias to rout out government dissenters. The situation has turned into a tribal war between Arab and African Muslims in which some 2.5 million people have been driven from their homes.

In August, the United Nations authorized the deployment to the region of 22,600 peacekeeping troops, but they have not yet been sent to Sudan because of an inability to recruit the soldiers from U.N. nations — and Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir's reluctance to allow them into his country.

The New York protest, organized by the Save Darfur Coalition, a 2-year-old coalition of more than 170 faith-based and social action organizations, was heavily attended by Jews, much like an April protest in Washington that drew between 60,000 and 75,000 people.

In Washington, some 20 percent were Jewish, according to some estimates.

Among a sea of New York protesters wearing blue hats and berets — which organizers suggested people wear to symbolize the blue helmets worn by U.N. peacekeepers — were many Jews wearing yarmulkes.

Jewish groups from all over the country came to hear speakers such as Albright; the executive director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, Rabbi Steve Gutow; the director of the National Council of Churches, Tony Kireopoulos; and actress Mira Sorvino.

Some came to the protest — which also featured musical performances by Suzanne Vega, O.A.R and others — as the leaders of Jewish groups.

Arieh Lebowitz, the communications director of the Jewish Labor Committee, an organization that acts as a liaison between the Jewish community and organized labor, brought a handful of people to the rally. The committee, which was founded in 1934 in response to the rise to power of the Nazis in Germany, has historically taken up social action causes that are both Jewish and non-Jewish because it sees the Jewish cause and the human cause as the same.

“I don't think this is a Jewish issue. It is a human issue,” Lebowitz said of the situation in Darfur. “Just as when the Nazis came to power, it was not a Jewish issue. It was a human issue.”

Others came under the auspices of Jewish groups.

Shula and Rachel Smith, sisters from Philadelphia who are 14 and 19, respectively, came as members of Habonim Dror, a labor Zionist youth movement.

“It seems like a lot of kids just don’t care about what is happening in Darfur because it doesn’t affect them,” Rachel said. That disaffection applies to everyone, she said, not just kids.

“But there are so many Jewish groups here, it’s awesome,” Shula added.

Some non-Jews hitched rides with Jewish groups.

Kaitlin Tufts and Nicole LaHousse are students at Colgate University who traveled four hours from upstate New York to the rally on a bus chaperoned by Rabbi David Levy, the Jewish chaplain at Colgate.

The group of 55 students from the university’s interfaith community — 12 of whom were Jewish, according to Levy — were accompanied on their trip by a Sudanese refugee who found out about the protest because he worked in the silkscreen shop that made the T-shirts the group had printed for the rally.

“In the Jewish community, we should be playing up the need to help,” said Ruth Messinger, the president of the American Jewish World Service, which co-founded the Save Darfur Coalition along with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

“We learned from the Holocaust about what happens when people are not willing to stand up for you. Now we are willing to stand up for people who are victims.”

Messinger, who was not at the event for personal reasons, but was checking in with organizers, said she is proud that the Jewish community has taken up the Darfur cause, especially since it is one that involves mostly Muslim victims and aggressors — a fact that she acknowledges is often downplayed.

But while Jews were well represented at the rally, some wondered about the relatively small turnout of another group that would seemingly have a natural connection with the plight of those suffering in Darfur — African Americans.

Though several black churches brought groups to the event, Albert Nzamukwereka was disappointed that there was not a heavier black turnout.

Nzamukwereka, a Tutsi survivor of the 1994 Rwandan genocide in which members of the Hutu tribe killed hundreds of thousands of Tutsis and moderate Hutu, is the director of peace-building efforts for Never Again International. With his organization, he and other native Africans regularly speak at schools — including Jewish schools here and in Europe — teaching children about what happened in Rwanda and what is happening in Darfur.

He said he has some optimism about the situation in Darfur because, while most people did not know about what was going on in Rwanda, many of the students with whom he

speaks seem to have a general understanding that something bad is happening in the Sudan.

Flanked by three Africans who are members of his speaking bureau and by the executive director of another speaking bureau, Voices of Rwanda, Taylor Krauss, who recently traveled to Darfur with the World Jewish Congress, Nzamukwereka told JTA that he was impressed by the Jewish turnout and by the efforts of Jews involved in the movement to save Darfur.

But he wondered, “Why is it that the African American community is less represented here? Is it because they are not aware of it or they don’t want to be a part of it?” he asked. “They should be a part of this.”



AJWS Grantee Wins First-Ever UNDP Red Ribbon Award

[American Jewish World Service](#)

Posted Date: August 16, 2006

AJWS Grantee Wins First-Ever UNDP Red Ribbon Award

TORONTO, August 16, 2006 – The Girl Child Network of Zimbabwe, an American Jewish World Service grantee since 2004, was awarded the United Nations Development Program Red Ribbon Award on Thursday, August 16, at the XVI International AIDS Conference in Toronto. This newly-created award provides worldwide recognition to an organization that has been creatively addressing HIV/AIDS prevention in Zimbabwe for the past seven years.

The UNDP Red Ribbon Award acknowledges the most innovative and least recognized efforts to combat HIV/AIDS in the developing world. Twenty-five finalists from across Latin America, Asia, and Africa were selected for this award, including three AJWS grantees: the Girl Child Network of Zimbabwe, the Rwanda Women’s Network, and GROOTS Kenya.

Crown Princess Mette-Marit of Norway presented the award to GCN, which was accepted by Girl Child Network Founder and Director Betty Makoni, longtime GCN supporter Tawona Shadreck Gwashavanhu, and 17-year-old GCN “girls’ club” member Silence Mazunga.

Founded in 1999 by a teacher, the Girl Child Network now supports more than 300 “girls’ clubs” around Zimbabwe that help girls to understand their rights and freedoms. The GCN also created “girls’ empowerment villages,” which provide safe transitional homes for girls who have been raped or abused, and GCN’s economic empowerment program trains girls in income-generating activities.

AJWS congratulates the dedicated staff of Girl Child Network, the hundreds of teachers who coach the GCN girls clubs, and the 20,000 girls that have been empowered by GCN’s extensive programming.

November 5, 2006

Forced Labor in Africa

To the Editor:

Thank you for reporting on the horrendous practice of child labor ("Africa's World of Forced Labor, in a 6-Year-Old's Eyes," front page, Oct. 29). Enacting laws and educating adults that children have a right to childhood are only part of the answer to ending child labor.

Parents sell their daughters and sons into indentured servitude because the families are starving and live in abject poverty. Communities in Ghana and other developing countries have put successful poverty alleviation strategies into effect that create jobs for adults.

This is done through microcredit and vocational training, such as for hairdressing and tailoring. Programs like these need support from local governments and outsiders to expand their reach. When families can sustain themselves, then education can begin.

Ruth W. Messinger
President, American Jewish World Service
New York, Oct. 31, 2006

The Boston Globe



James Dobson's Focus on the Family has played a major role in presidential politics.
(Jeff Fusco/ Getty Images)

PART 2: CHURCH MEETS STATE | EXPORTING FAITH

Religious right wields clout Secular groups losing funding amid pressure

By Michael Kranish, Globe Staff | October 9, 2006

For six decades, CARE has been a vital ally to the US government. It supplied the famed CARE packages to Europe's starving masses after World War II, and its work with the poor has been celebrated by US presidents. So the group was thrilled when it received a major contract from the Bush administration to fight AIDS in Africa and Asia.

But this time, instead of accolades came attacks. Religious conservatives contended that the \$50 million contract, under which CARE was to distribute money to both secular and faith-based groups, was being guided by an organization out of touch with religious values.

Senator Rick Santorum, a Pennsylvania Republican, charged last year that CARE was "anti-American" and "promoted a pro-prostitution agenda." Focus on the Family, the religious group headed by James Dobson, said the agency that delivered the contract, the US Agency for International Development, was a "liberal cancer."

The complaining paid off. CARE's \$50 million contract is being phased out this year; it has been replaced with a \$200 million program of grants that is targeted at faith-based providers, and overseen by USAID itself.

The pressure on CARE is emblematic of that facing many other secular groups. President Bush's faith-based initiative has not only increased funding for church groups, but also raised the expectations of the religious right, which has asserted a stronger role in setting policy.

The pattern of outcry by religious conservatives, followed by accommodation by the administration, has been replicated on numerous occasions at USAID, from personnel decisions to choices of who runs humanitarian programs overseas.

In the process, secular groups have seen an overall drop in funding. CARE's USAID dollars declined every year, from \$138 million in fiscal 2001 to \$96 million in fiscal 2005, the last year for which data is available, according to a Globe survey of prime contractors and grantees in the development arena.

Kristin Kalla , the CARE official overseeing its AIDS contract, said she found herself in the middle of a war over politics, religion, and money.

“There was a lot of resentment, a lot of pressure, from the religious right feeling that they supported Bush, especially for the second term, and they wanted to get paid their dues, they wanted a piece of the pie in terms of foreign assistance,” Kalla said.

James Towey , the former head of the White House's faith-based office, acknowledged that he fought hard to shift international aid to faith-based groups, although he denied it was a political payback.

“The fact is [officials at USAID] tended to be left of center and they tended to be more of a secular perspective than a religious one,” said Towey, who served as Bush's top faith-based official from 2002 until June 2006. “There were pockets of extreme hostility to faith-based organizations. There were instances where people had agendas that were very clearly at odds with what President Bush had laid out as his foreign policy agenda. . . . We wanted to see the new groups have a chance.”

Under pressure from Dobson, members of Congress, and Towey's office at the White House, USAID officials promoted groups favoring abstinence as the prime means of preventing AIDS. The officials gave funds to one such group despite a review panel's determination it was not suitable, and allegedly stripping money from a group that criticized the administration's emphasis on abstinence.

And USAID required groups to sign an anti-prostitution pledge despite concerns over its constitutionality. The pledge required all organizations receiving USAID money overseas to renounce prostitution, which some groups interpreted as abandoning efforts to prevent prostitutes from spreading AIDS.

The Brazilian government, which has had success in decreasing AIDS by working with prostitutes, refused to sign the pledge and lost a \$40 million grant.

In an affidavit for a lawsuit over the matter, Pedro Chequer , director of Brazil's AIDS program, said his country strived to adhere to “the established principles of the scientific method and not allow theological beliefs and dogma to interfere.”

Abstinence vs. condoms

AIDS has been the Bush administration's top overseas health priority, and it consumes about half of the global health budget, much of which is overseen by USAID.

But disagreement has raged for years over how best to prevent AIDS. US policy has long supported condom use. But some religious conservatives say distributing condoms actually increases AIDS by promoting sexual activity. Others say the only sure way to stop AIDS is by teaching abstinence and faithfulness.

With faith-based groups seeking a major share of the anti-AIDS funds, the administration sought to resolve the controversy in 2003 by endorsing a three-pronged strategy of promoting abstinence, faithfulness, and, when appropriate, condoms.

Under a bill approved by Congress and signed by Bush, one third of the administration's \$3 billion international AIDS prevention budget must be spent on programs promoting "abstinence until marriage." Meanwhile, the administration was also buying hundreds of millions of condoms for distribution overseas.

But some leaders of the religious right felt that any program involving condoms is inappropriate, and they focused their anger on USAID.

The dispute erupted in public after a remark in 2002 by then-secretary of state Colin Powell, who had visited Africa and been appalled at the AIDS rate. In a television interview, Powell said that while he respected churches that are opposed to condoms, "In my own judgment, condoms are a way to prevent infection and, therefore, I support their use."

Dobson blasted back, declaring "Colin Powell is the secretary of state, not the secretary of health. He is talking about a subject he doesn't understand."

Raised by a Nazarene preacher, Dobson has emerged over the past three decades as one of the nation's top political leaders among religious conservatives. He is known for his strong views against gay marriage and abortion.

Dobson's organization, Focus on the Family, has played a major role in presidential politics, sending out 5 million letters, postcards, and e-mails just before the 2004 election. He is close to Bush and White House adviser Karl Rove .

The administration had hoped to avoid fights with religious conservatives by putting people in charge of USAID with strong faith-based ties: administrator Andrew Natsios and global health director Dr. Anne Peterson .

Natsios is a former Massachusetts legislator who once supervised the Big Dig and has served as vice president of World Vision, the largest evangelical recipient of USAID grants. Peterson, a physician, is an evangelical Christian and former Virginia state health commissioner who has also worked with Christian groups in Africa.

Peterson said in an interview that she assumed she would be embraced by religious conservatives.

She was wrong: Dobson's group singled her out for a series of attacks, since her global health division oversaw AIDS policy.

In September 2004, Peterson boarded a plane for Colorado on a secret and sensitive mission: to try to prevent an all-out assault by Dobson, who had vowed to use his clout with Congress to pressure USAID into giving more funds to faith-based groups.

Peterson spent the day at the Colorado Springs headquarters of Focus on the Family, culminating in a short, terse audience with Dobson himself.

"Where do you stand on condoms?" Dobson asked, according to Peterson.

Peterson replied that, as a physician, she was convinced condoms played an important role in preventing AIDS, along with abstinence and faithfulness. Dobson was displeased, she said.

"It was very clear that I did not budge him on the condom issue," Peterson said. Focus on the Family, meanwhile, prepared a briefing that was critical of Peterson, quoting her as saying that the Bush administration had doubled condom availability in developing nations.

Within months, Peterson had resigned for personal reasons, deeply bruised by the attacks.

"I had not expected to have that from the Christian community," she said. "I had expected to find more resonance with a broader group of people to find a common ground. This is a core good thing to do, help people to stay healthy. It was disconcerting to find that when money is on the table everybody fights harder to get the piece of it."

Attacks on USAID

Dobson's group, meanwhile, turned its attention to others at USAID and the AIDS contract administered by CARE.

A private briefing on Capitol Hill in January 2005 for 50 congressional staffers prompted more than two dozen members of Congress to sign a letter demanding that more money go to faith-based groups that favored abstinence.

They complained in the letter to Natsios that government funding for faith-based groups was being "delivered by anti-American, anti-abstinence, pro-prostitution, and pro-drug use groups."

In its printed materials for the briefing, Focus on the Family targeted a USAID official who it claimed was gay and committed to a pro-homosexual agenda.

Natsios, who left his post as USAID administrator earlier this year, said of the attack: "It was over the top, it was outrageous."

Dobson declined to comment. The briefing was overseen by the group's chief public policy officer, Peter Brandt. In an interview, Brandt acknowledged that "that individual should not have been targeted." But he stood by the attacks on USAID and what he called the "condom cartel."

Peterson was replaced as head of global health by a well-known conservative evangelical leader, Kent Hill. Unlike Peterson, he had no medical degree and no prior experience in public health.

Over his long career, Hill had worked to protect evangelicals in the former Soviet Union, wrote a book stressing the importance of evangelism in the world, and ran into controversy when he became president of Eastern Nazarene College in Quincy and sought to ban non-Christians from teaching positions.

While some liberal groups expressed concern about Hill's record, he has endorsed Peterson's position on condoms, and used his credibility with evangelicals to urge religious leaders to show more civility.

"I can tell you from personal experience that all too many Christians on both the right and the left display an arrogance and self-righteousness about their views," Hill told a conference on faith and international development in Michigan last February. "Too many Christians are judgmental, black-and-white thinkers who don't do their homework, do not nuance their positions, and on top of that are nasty and mean-spirited to those that they have a disagreement with, and in the end they undermine what they are trying to do. But what is worse, they undermine their faith."

Despite the insistence of senior USAID officials that they were not influenced by Dobson in making grant awards, many secular groups contend that the attacks have had a major impact.

They cite a case in which Natsios overruled his own review panel to provide a grant to Children's AIDS Fund, a group that highlights abstinence.

The fund has ties to both Focus on the Family and the Bush administration. It was cofounded by Shepherd and Anita Smith. Shepherd Smith has worked closely with Dobson and attended the Focus on the Family

briefing that attacked USAID. Anita Smith has been the chairwoman of the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV and AIDS.

The Smiths believed that their application was just the kind being sought by the Bush administration. But USAID's technical review panel determined that the grant proposal was "not suitable for funding." The agency has refused to release the panel's report, leaving it unclear why the proposal was considered unsuitable.

In any case, Natsios wrote a memo on Oct. 21, 2004, urging that Randall Tobias, who was then in charge of the international AIDS program, approve the funding because the group favored abstinence.

"The selection of a 'non-suitable' applicant such as [Children's AIDS Fund] . . . is not inconsistent with USAID's grant-making policies," Natsios wrote. Tobias agreed, and funding was granted on Nov. 1, 2004. The grant could reach \$10 million over a five-year period.

The memo raises the question of how many other "nonsuitable" applicants have received money from USAID. Representative Henry Waxman, a California Democrat, wrote to the Bush administration that the approval "raises questions of political cronyism."

The Smiths said in separate interviews that no political pressure was applied. They said their group is not faith-based, although it distributes money to faith-based groups.

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"The money is so big this is not just about ideology, it is about money," Cowal said. "Before, the amount of money available for HIV and AIDS internationally was very small so a lot of people weren't interested. Now it is very big. Suddenly people not interested in the million dollars are interested in the billion dollars."

'A political slush fund'

Indeed, one of the biggest sources of money to faith-based groups comes from the Bush administration's AIDS initiative, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), with much of the money having been funneled through USAID.

The total PEPFAR budget is \$15 billion over five years, including \$3 billion for prevention. Of that amount, about \$1 billion must go for "abstinence-until-marriage" programs.

Some of those who have lost funding under the Bush administration, however, say the huge abstinence budget has been used as a political payout to faith-based supporters of administration policies.

For example, a nonprofit organization called Advocates for Youth, which focuses on AIDS and teen pregnancy, says it lost an \$800,000 contract for AIDS prevention among youth in South Africa, Nigeria, and Botswana because it had been critical of the administration's emphasis on abstinence.

"At times it turns into a political slush fund for organizations that are ideologically aligned with the

administration rather than public health organizations with a proven track record," said James Wagoner, president of Advocates for Youth. A PEPFAR spokesman said the group's grant expired.

Dr. Mark Dybul, who oversees PEPFAR, said funding decisions are all made on merit. But he added that he considers faith-based groups to be crucial partners: "Our goal is not the recruitment of faith-based organizations . . . [but] to me, as the coordinator, you cannot achieve those goals without faith- and community-based organizations."

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Kalla said CARE made special efforts to fund faith-based groups, but she said administration officials sometimes criticized the grants that went to Muslim and Jewish groups.

"We were told repeatedly by staff at USAID directly in meetings that these were not the 'right types' of faith-based organizations that the White House faith-based office was looking for," Kalla said. In an effort to placate USAID, she said, CARE awarded a \$100,000 grant to Samaritan's Purse, a group run by Bush's friend, Rev. Franklin Graham, for work in Mozambique. She said USAID informed her it was the right type of faith-based group.

The USAID official who oversaw the CARE program said he did not pressure Kalla to favor conservative groups. And Natsios and Hill said that all groups are treated equally in the funding process.

Nonetheless, the pressure on USAID from Christian groups has raised persistent questions about whether Jewish and Muslim organizations are being overshadowed.

The Globe survey of prime contractors and grantees indicated that 98.3 percent of funds to faith-based groups went to Christian-led organizations.

Eugene Lin, a former employee of the office of faith-based programs at USAID, said the office catered mostly to evangelical Christians. He calculated that of 167 organizations invited to discuss potential grants during a 15-month period ending in September 2004, only five were non-Christian.

"I was fairly outspoken in the office, saying it is really unfair we never invite Jewish or Muslim groups to our office, everyone is Christian," Lin said. "There is no balance whatsoever."

Lin said that he was told by the acting director of the office, Linda Shovlain, that she wanted to have what she described as a "Come to Jesus" meeting to discuss his work. Lin said he felt intimidated because Shovlain had a 2-foot high crucifix over a conference table in her office.

Lin eventually was fired, and filed a religious-discrimination complaint.

In a deposition, Shovlain said her "Come to Jesus" remark was misunderstood.

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A USAID panel dismissed Lin's complaint in July. He has filed an appeal.

The panel endorsed Shovlain's right to display the crucifix, quoting from a 1997 federal regulation that a federal employee may display religious art as long as it does not create the impression that the government is "favoring or disfavoring a particular religion."

Fighting back on pledge

A centerpiece of the religious right's agenda for USAID is a law passed by Congress and signed by Bush in 2003 that requires any US-based group receiving anti-AIDS funds to adopt a policy against prostitution.

The law says funding cannot be given to any group "that does not have a policy explicitly opposing prostitution and sex trafficking." Supporters said they hoped the legislation would "eradicate" prostitution and thus curtail the spread of AIDS.

While few, if any, aid groups support prostitution, many expressed concern that the US policy was so broad -- and applied even to their private funds -- that it would obstruct their outreach to sex workers who are at high risk of transmitting the AIDS virus.

In some countries, half of all prostitutes are infected with the AIDS virus, according to congressional testimony. As a result, USAID's leaders originally were sympathetic to groups that resisted the anti-prostitution pledge.

The issue seemed to be resolved when the Justice Department advised USAID that the law was unconstitutional on the grounds that it violated free speech.

But the decision set off a firestorm of protest from the religious right and its allies in Congress, after which Bush's Justice Department reversed itself.

When USAID then started requiring the pledge, some major grant recipients refused to take it -- and suffered.

The Brazilian government, which lost \$40 million, said the pledge would undercut one of its most successful anti-AIDS strategies, persuading sex workers to use condoms or other measures to stop spreading the disease.

Chequer, the country's AIDS director, said its work with prostitutes is a major reason why Brazil's infection rate among young adults is only 1 percent.

"We view sex workers as essential partners in our HIV prevention efforts," Chequer said.

The US government disputed that the pledge would suspend the Brazilian AIDS program, but other

funding recipients interpreted the pledge the same way as the Brazilians.

American Jewish World Service, one of a handful of non-Christian faith-based groups to get US funds, received a single subgrant of \$60,000 for AIDS work in Kenya, provided through the CARE program. The organization reluctantly agreed to sign the anti-prostitution pledge but quickly had second thoughts. The organization tries to stop the spread of AIDS by providing education opportunities for children of prostitutes, which can help mothers leave the brothels.

Julia Greenberg, the group's international aid director, said she believes the anti-prostitution pledge was designed to make grants more accessible to conservative Christian groups. She said her organization has not sought more funds "because of the politics involved."

Some organizations that refused to sign the pledge have fought back. A company called DKT International says it lost US funds for a \$60,000 AIDS program in Vietnam. DKT filed suit against the federal government, saying the pledge violated its First Amendment rights.

A similar lawsuit was brought against USAID by several other groups, including Pathfinder International, a Boston-based humanitarian group, and an aid group founded by billionaire George Soros.

To some conservative faith-based leaders, however, the plaintiffs in both cases are symbolic of what's wrong with US policy. Soros financed groups opposing Bush's re election. DKT is run by Philip D. Harvey, who operates a large mail-order pornography business that is separate from his anti-AIDS organization.

But in both cases, judges sided with the plaintiffs, issuing restraining orders that prohibited USAID from enforcing the anti-prostitution pledge.

Moreover, a judge in the Soros case declared that the Bush administration had altered its stance on the pledge due to political pressure.

US District Judge Victor Marrero noted that Senator Tom Coburn, an Oklahoma Republican, had written a May 19, 2005, letter to Bush blasting USAID for funding programs for prostitutes to attend "parties and games."

The sponsor of the program mentioned in the letter said that it was a bingo-style program designed to educate prostitutes about AIDS.

The judge found that the pressure had an immediate effect: By June 2005, the Justice Department had reversed its position on the constitutionality of the pledge, and USAID was requiring groups to sign it.

"This shift in position coincided with pressure exerted upon USAID and the President," Marrero wrote.

Enforcing the pledge would do "irreparable harm" to the aid groups' rights to free speech, Marrero said.

The Bush administration appealed the decision in August.

Globe Correspondent Kevin Baron contributed to this report. ■

The Boston Globe



James Dobson's Focus on the Family has played a major role in presidential politics.
(Jeff Fusco/ Getty Images)

PART 2: CHURCH MEETS STATE | EXPORTING FAITH

Religious right wields clout Secular groups losing funding amid pressure

By Michael Kranish, Globe Staff | October 9, 2006

For six decades, CARE has been a vital ally to the US government. It supplied the famed CARE packages to Europe's starving masses after World War II, and its work with the poor has been celebrated by US presidents. So the group was thrilled when it received a major contract from the Bush administration to fight AIDS in Africa and Asia.

But this time, instead of accolades came attacks. Religious conservatives contended that the \$50 million contract, under which CARE was to distribute money to both secular and faith-based groups, was being guided by an organization out of touch with religious values.

Senator Rick Santorum, a Pennsylvania Republican, charged last year that CARE was "anti-American" and "promoted a pro-prostitution agenda." Focus on the Family, the religious group headed by James Dobson, said the agency that delivered the contract, the US Agency for International Development, was a "liberal cancer."

The complaining paid off. CARE's \$50 million contract is being phased out this year; it has been replaced with a \$200 million program of grants that is targeted at faith-based providers, and overseen by USAID itself.

The pressure on CARE is emblematic of that facing many other secular groups. President Bush's faith-based initiative has not only increased funding for church groups, but also raised the expectations of the religious right, which has asserted a stronger role in setting policy.

The pattern of outcry by religious conservatives, followed by accommodation by the administration, has been replicated on numerous occasions at USAID, from personnel decisions to choices of who runs humanitarian programs overseas.

In the process, secular groups have seen an overall drop in funding. CARE's USAID dollars declined every year, from \$138 million in fiscal 2001 to \$96 million in fiscal 2005, the last year for which data is available, according to a Globe survey of prime contractors and grantees in the development arena.

Kristin Kalla , the CARE official overseeing its AIDS contract, said she found herself in the middle of a war over politics, religion, and money.

“There was a lot of resentment, a lot of pressure, from the religious right feeling that they supported Bush, especially for the second term, and they wanted to get paid their dues, they wanted a piece of the pie in terms of foreign assistance,” Kalla said.

James Towey , the former head of the White House's faith-based office, acknowledged that he fought hard to shift international aid to faith-based groups, although he denied it was a political payback.

“The fact is [officials at USAID] tended to be left of center and they tended to be more of a secular perspective than a religious one,” said Towey, who served as Bush's top faith-based official from 2002 until June 2006. “There were pockets of extreme hostility to faith-based organizations. There were instances where people had agendas that were very clearly at odds with what President Bush had laid out as his foreign policy agenda. . . . We wanted to see the new groups have a chance.”

Under pressure from Dobson, members of Congress, and Towey's office at the White House, USAID officials promoted groups favoring abstinence as the prime means of preventing AIDS. The officials gave funds to one such group despite a review panel's determination it was not suitable, and allegedly stripping money from a group that criticized the administration's emphasis on abstinence.

And USAID required groups to sign an anti-prostitution pledge despite concerns over its constitutionality. The pledge required all organizations receiving USAID money overseas to renounce prostitution, which some groups interpreted as abandoning efforts to prevent prostitutes from spreading AIDS.

The Brazilian government, which has had success in decreasing AIDS by working with prostitutes, refused to sign the pledge and lost a \$40 million grant.

In an affidavit for a lawsuit over the matter, Pedro Chequer , director of Brazil's AIDS program, said his country strived to adhere to “the established principles of the scientific method and not allow theological beliefs and dogma to interfere.”

Abstinence vs. condoms

AIDS has been the Bush administration's top overseas health priority, and it consumes about half of the global health budget, much of which is overseen by USAID.

But disagreement has raged for years over how best to prevent AIDS. US policy has long supported condom use. But some religious conservatives say distributing condoms actually increases AIDS by promoting sexual activity. Others say the only sure way to stop AIDS is by teaching abstinence and faithfulness.

With faith-based groups seeking a major share of the anti-AIDS funds, the administration sought to resolve the controversy in 2003 by endorsing a three-pronged strategy of promoting abstinence, faithfulness, and, when appropriate, condoms.

Under a bill approved by Congress and signed by Bush, one third of the administration's \$3 billion international AIDS prevention budget must be spent on programs promoting "abstinence until marriage." Meanwhile, the administration was also buying hundreds of millions of condoms for distribution overseas.

But some leaders of the religious right felt that any program involving condoms is inappropriate, and they focused their anger on USAID.

The dispute erupted in public after a remark in 2002 by then-secretary of state Colin Powell, who had visited Africa and been appalled at the AIDS rate. In a television interview, Powell said that while he respected churches that are opposed to condoms, "In my own judgment, condoms are a way to prevent infection and, therefore, I support their use."

Dobson blasted back, declaring "Colin Powell is the secretary of state, not the secretary of health. He is talking about a subject he doesn't understand."

Raised by a Nazarene preacher, Dobson has emerged over the past three decades as one of the nation's top political leaders among religious conservatives. He is known for his strong views against gay marriage and abortion.

Dobson's organization, Focus on the Family, has played a major role in presidential politics, sending out 5 million letters, postcards, and e-mails just before the 2004 election. He is close to Bush and White House adviser Karl Rove .

The administration had hoped to avoid fights with religious conservatives by putting people in charge of USAID with strong faith-based ties: administrator Andrew Natsios and global health director Dr. Anne Peterson .

Natsios is a former Massachusetts legislator who once supervised the Big Dig and has served as vice president of World Vision, the largest evangelical recipient of USAID grants. Peterson, a physician, is an evangelical Christian and former Virginia state health commissioner who has also worked with Christian groups in Africa.

Peterson said in an interview that she assumed she would be embraced by religious conservatives.

She was wrong: Dobson's group singled her out for a series of attacks, since her global health division oversaw AIDS policy.

In September 2004, Peterson boarded a plane for Colorado on a secret and sensitive mission: to try to prevent an all-out assault by Dobson, who had vowed to use his clout with Congress to pressure USAID into giving more funds to faith-based groups.

Peterson spent the day at the Colorado Springs headquarters of Focus on the Family, culminating in a short, terse audience with Dobson himself.

"Where do you stand on condoms?" Dobson asked, according to Peterson.

Peterson replied that, as a physician, she was convinced condoms played an important role in preventing AIDS, along with abstinence and faithfulness. Dobson was displeased, she said.

"It was very clear that I did not budge him on the condom issue," Peterson said. Focus on the Family, meanwhile, prepared a briefing that was critical of Peterson, quoting her as saying that the Bush administration had doubled condom availability in developing nations.

Within months, Peterson had resigned for personal reasons, deeply bruised by the attacks.

"I had not expected to have that from the Christian community," she said. "I had expected to find more resonance with a broader group of people to find a common ground. This is a core good thing to do, help people to stay healthy. It was disconcerting to find that when money is on the table everybody fights harder to get the piece of it."

Attacks on USAID

Dobson's group, meanwhile, turned its attention to others at USAID and the AIDS contract administered by CARE.

A private briefing on Capitol Hill in January 2005 for 50 congressional staffers prompted more than two dozen members of Congress to sign a letter demanding that more money go to faith-based groups that favored abstinence.

They complained in the letter to Natsios that government funding for faith-based groups was being "delivered by anti-American, anti-abstinence, pro-prostitution, and pro-drug use groups."

In its printed materials for the briefing, Focus on the Family targeted a USAID official who it claimed was gay and committed to a pro-homosexual agenda.

Natsios, who left his post as USAID administrator earlier this year, said of the attack: "It was over the top, it was outrageous."

Dobson declined to comment. The briefing was overseen by the group's chief public policy officer, Peter Brandt. In an interview, Brandt acknowledged that "that individual should not have been targeted." But he stood by the attacks on USAID and what he called the "condom cartel."

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A similar lawsuit was brought against USAID by several other groups, including Pathfinder International, a Boston-based humanitarian group, and an aid group founded by billionaire George Soros.

To some conservative faith-based leaders, however, the plaintiffs in both cases are symbolic of what's wrong with US policy. Soros financed groups opposing Bush's re election. DKT is run by Philip D. Harvey, who operates a large mail-order pornography business that is separate from his anti-AIDS organization.

But in both cases, judges sided with the plaintiffs, issuing restraining orders that prohibited USAID from enforcing the anti-prostitution pledge.

Moreover, a judge in the Soros case declared that the Bush administration had altered its stance on the pledge due to political pressure.

US District Judge Victor Marrero noted that Senator Tom Coburn, an Oklahoma Republican, had written a May 19, 2005, letter to Bush blasting USAID for funding programs for prostitutes to attend "parties and games."

The sponsor of the program mentioned in the letter said that it was a bingo-style program designed to educate prostitutes about AIDS.

The judge found that the pressure had an immediate effect: By June 2005, the Justice Department had reversed its position on the constitutionality of the pledge, and USAID was requiring groups to sign it.

"This shift in position coincided with pressure exerted upon USAID and the President," Marrero wrote.

Enforcing the pledge would do "irreparable harm" to the aid groups' rights to free speech, Marrero said.

The Bush administration appealed the decision in August.

Globe Correspondent Kevin Baron contributed to this report. ■