

Gates grant to improve healthcare coverage in African media

The International Women's Media Foundation has announced that it has received a \$1.5 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to develop a campaign to enhance the quality of healthcare coverage in the African media with responsible, accurate and relevant media messages.

The campaign will bring together leaders in the African media to evaluate the quality of health coverage in Africa and then devise strategies and actions to raise the quality of reporting on healthcare issues. It will be conducted through the African Women's Media Center, which was founded by the IWM in 1997 and is based in Dakar, Senegal.

"This grant will provide the AWMC with the means to train African women journalists to become better reporters on healthcare issues across the continent," said IWMF co-chair Lynn Povich. "The AWMC's experience training reporters to cover HIV and AIDS has taught us that when reporters are armed with the facts about complex issues and the skills they need to report effectively, they are more likely to produce stories that hold governments accountable, educate the public and help discredit stereotypes and myths. That is the power of the media."

An AWMC priority has been to train women journalists to report on HIV and AIDS. The center has developed manuals and resource guides on covering HIV and AIDS and has trained women journalists in both French- and English-speaking African countries to report on the pandemic. The grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will help the AWMC expand its programs to other healthcare issues and train more journalists to be effective health reporters.

"The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is very pleased to support this important campaign," said Joe Cerrell, the foundation's director of public affairs. "Enhancing the quality of health coverage in Africa will build awareness of critical health issues and strengthen commitment for action."

The International Women's Media Foundation launched the African Women's Media Center in 1997. The center helps women in the African media develop skills by sponsoring training workshops and has been a pioneer in using the Internet to conduct training. A 13-member advisory committee of African women in the media guides the center.

The International Women's Media Foundation was launched in 1990 with a mission to strengthen the role of women in the news media worldwide, based on the belief that no press is truly free unless women share an equal voice. The IWMF network is more than 1,500 women in the media in more than 130 countries worldwide.

For more information on the IWMF, go to www.iwmf.org. For more information on the AWMC, go to www.awmc.com.

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