



RESPECT e-Zine

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[Back to the Newsletter](#)

## Logan Cochrane Leads HIV/AIDS Awareness Training

by Rebecca Schiller

Twenty-one year-old Logan Cochrane, a recent graduate of the University of Victoria, British Columbia in Canada has been involved with RESPECT's letter exchange program. He is now dedicating eight months in an initiative to personally educate African refugees about HIV/AIDS. From January 2006 to September 2006, Logan is visiting selected refugee communities in east and central Africa to spread HIV/AIDS awareness.

Logan is hoping that, through his HIV/AIDS Awareness Training Project, people in Africa can "further understand the processes involved with HIV transmission, how prevention can occur, and leave a source of information within the community."

UNAIDS estimates that currently over 40 million people are infected with HIV and it will be history's most deadly virus, even more so than the bubonic plague. East and central Africa, Cochrane's destinations, are home to half of the total world-wide infections.

Refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are some of the most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. They have a reduced access to education and HIV/AIDS prevention, as well as a reduced access to health care. They are more likely to be poor, therefore unable to afford condoms, testing, and/or treatments. The risk of infection is also raised by population mix and mobility, as well as the dangers of rape and other illicit acts of a high-risk nature faced by women.

The majority of Logan Cochrane's trip to Africa is aimed towards helping educate refugees and IDPs about HIV/AIDS and, therefore, enabling future prevention.

Cochrane's project is divided into three major parts. Three months are being spent in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from January 15 to March 15. He is volunteering in a local orphan care center through Adoption Advocates International (AAI), where he will be caring for infants and children, as well as possibly teaching English and history. The second part of his trip will be spent volunteering at the Ethiopia AIDS Resource Center, continuing there until April 15th.

For the remainder of his stay in Africa, Logan will be traveling to villages and refugee camps in The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Tanzania, and Benin. He hopes to reach teen and adult refugees, IDPs of both sexes, women and girls especially, and local medical staff and workers, a total of 500 to 1,000 refugees. In each location, Logan will lead interactive community awareness meetings, train attendees, and provide information about protection from contracting HIV/AIDS.

This training should provide attendees with a clear understanding of HIV and how it is transmitted, of how to prevent the spread of the virus, knowledge of previous campaigns (and their successes and failures), and a desire to overcome stigma

and gender-related barriers to prevention.

Logan will be staying with families as often as possible throughout the trip to reduce costs. Those costs that are needed include transportation, food, notebooks, pens, shirts, HIV tests, condoms, etc. for attendees, and monetary compensations for people who cannot work during the day while they are attending the training.

Logan says that he is "feeling great" about his trip to Africa. "There has been lots of planning, hundreds of emails, some scratchy phone calls and I am excited to meet those faceless people I've been working with for eight months."

You can read more about Logan's trip, and his progress, on the [Working to Empower](#) website.

[Back to the Newsletter](#)

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