

## Interview

### South Sudanese doctor receives PEPFAR award

*The United States AIDS Program known as the 'President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief' (PEPFAR) has awarded the 2011 Lahya Shiimi Award to Dr Basilica Modi. This is the first time a South Sudanese has received this prestigious award "in recognition of the outstanding team work, leadership, dedication and critical contributions to ensuring the sustainability of the HIV/AIDS response in South Sudan"*

Dr Edward Eremugo Luka interviewed Dr Basilica Modi for SSMJ

#### **Dr Modi, what is the Lahya Shiimi Award?**

The Lahya Shiimi Award for Exceptional Contribution to PEPFAR was established in 2007 in honour of Ms. Lahya Dnapandula Shiimi, Senior Technical Advisor for HIV/AIDS at USAID/Namibia, who passed away in April 2006. Lahya Shiimi was respected, admired, and loved by everyone who worked with her. She was one of Namibia's most accomplished and respected HIV/AIDS experts. At USAID, Shiimi helped lead a massive and historic expansion in U.S. assistance to Namibia's HIV/AIDS prevention, control and treatment programme under PEPFAR.

#### **What is the significance of the award for South Sudan?**

The award is presented in recognition of the exceptional contribution to PEPFAR. My receiving this global award highlights to the entire PEPFAR community the critical work being done in South Sudan in the area of HIV/AIDS.

#### **What is PEPFAR?**

PEPFAR is the U.S. Government initiative to help prevent new HIV/AIDS infections and to save the lives of those suffering from HIV/AIDS around the world. The PEPFAR/South Sudan strategy is to operate among 'Most at Risk Populations' in the counties bordering high prevalence countries and along the transport corridors in South Sudan as well as to help to strengthen the Ministry of Health's capacity to address HIV/AIDS.

#### **Which programmes are supported by PEPFAR in South Sudan?**

There are many covering: Prevention, Adult Care and Support, Strategic Information, Training and Laboratory Strengthening.

#### **What is your role in these PEPFAR Programmes?**

I am the USAID portfolio manager for PEPFAR/South Sudan. In this capacity I play the key management role, taking the lead in representing USAID/South Sudan on the PEPFAR South Sudan United States Government (USG) team. I help to design, manage, implement, evaluate and report on the USG strategy and country operational plan. I also coordinate HIV related activities with other stakeholders. In addition I represent the USG on the Country Coordinating Mechanism for Global Fund (CCM) and other committees and work groups, and I work



*Basilica Modi with Charles Lerman, Clifford Lubitz and Susan Fine on her right, and Ambassador Barrie Walkley on her left.*

*(Credit: Taban Emmanuel).*

with the other USG agencies that are implementing PEPFAR in South Sudan. I coordinate closely with RoSS counterparts to ensure that the PEPFAR/South Sudan program is aligned to the National HIV/AIDS strategic framework.

#### **How will the award support and improve your work?**

This award has motivated me so much, I know I am on the right track and I need to continue to support the fight against HIV in RoSS by playing my role effectively.

#### **Briefly highlight your educational and work background?**

I am a graduate of Juba University Medical School and I acquired a master's degree in Public Health from Braun School of Public Health in Jerusalem, Israel. I did my internship and hardship in different hospitals in North Sudan and worked with Internally Displaced Persons in the outskirts of Omdurman and Khartoum.

I relocated to South Sudan in 2001 and worked on an HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health pilot project supported by USAID and implemented by International Rescue Cross (IRC) in Rumbek. I joined USAID in 2004 and am still working with them.

#### **Have you any special message to our readers?**

The people and government of South Sudan as well as the donors supporting development in this country need to pay special attention to the fight against HIV/AIDS, We need to avoid the serious impact of HIV epidemics that have occurred in other developing countries, which includes losing limited human resources and causing a heavy economic burden. South Sudan has a chance to avoid escalation of the epidemic if all citizens get involved and we implement the right interventions now.