
The Arts and Health in East-Central Africa

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The UF Center for Arts in Medicine's "AIM for Africa" initiative engages the arts to address health in African communities. As a part of this initiative over the past year, I have continued to research the use of the arts in health practices in east-central Africa, and have developed local networks and training programs in the region. Over the past four years, my research has identified widespread and highly innovative applications of the arts in health programs by organizations in the region. These organizations expressed the need to bring program professionals together, along with government officials, to formally discuss the arts and health.

As a result, in May 2011, the Center for Arts in Medicine, in partnership with the Global Alliance for Arts & Health and the Rwanda Red Cross, hosted the two-day "East-Central Africa Arts & Health Forum" in Kigali, Rwanda. With support from Johnson & Johnson, the forum

brought together 120 government leaders and arts and health professionals from six African countries: Burundi, DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda. The two-day meeting presented effective programs that use the arts to enhance individual and community health, improve health literacy, and provide new vocational skills to people whose lives are affected by illness and disability. Attendees discovered and shared resources, collected best practices, and learned how to implement and sustain programs. Government officials developed an understanding of the arts and health as a formal discipline, and participated in planning for its future.

The forum resulted in the formation of national arts and health networks in three countries, and identified a need for more in-depth education and training opportunities in the region. Thus, the 2012 Arts in Healthcare for East-Central Africa Training Program was planned in partnership with the University of Goma,

the Kigali Independent University and the Rwanda Arts in Healthcare Initiative. I led the training program at the Kigali Independent University in October of 2012 for over 50 students and professionals from Rwanda and DRC.

Following the program, the regional leaders envisioned the development of a revenue-generating annual arts and health training program in east-central Africa that would draw participants from around the globe to learn how to use the arts to improve health in developing communities. Over the past year, with support from the UF Warrington College of Business and in partnership with our East-Central Africa leaders, I developed a business plan, and began a train-the-trainer program for the local leaders. The initiative was joined by Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda, where the first annual Arts in Healthcare for Global Communities Intensive Training Program will be launched, featuring local trainers, in May of 2014. For more information, see www.arts.ufl.edu/cam/aimForAfrica.aspx



Jill Sonke is Director of the UF Center for Arts in Medicine and current 2013-14 chair of the CAS Advisory Council. The AIM for Africa program has been supported by the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs, Johnson & Johnson, the UF Center for World Arts, the UF Center for African Studies, the Global Alliance for Arts & Health, the Rwanda Red Cross, and the Kigali Independent University.