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[TITLE:] **“DEBI” in the African Refugee/Immigrants Community**

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ISSUE: “DEBI” in the African Refugees/ Immigrants Community.

SETTING: Clarkston district, DeKalb County GA. Audience is the African Refugee/Immigrant population of Clarkston, DeKalb County GA. The Greater Atlanta area is experiencing an increase in refugee and immigrant populations from Africa. However, there is lack of HIV-related services targeting these populations. Recent communication among physicians in the DeKalb County and Grady Infectious Disease Program has shown that the HIV virus is spreading fast among African immigrant populations and yet these groups are not adequately tracked in the Ryan White program.

PROJECT: A pilot of the DEBI Community Promise in the African Refugee and Immigrant population of Clarkston, DeKalb County GA. Over the last 20 years 46,462 refugees have been resettled in the State of Georgia. The African refugee and immigrant populations in this country are among the least served and hardest to reach. African immigrants are a very diverse population, representing different ethnic groups, and depicting a wide array of cultural backgrounds. Their immigration experiences, historical, political, religious beliefs and practices are different. Hence DEBI efforts must be skillfully tailored to meet their needs.

RESULTS: Significant gaps still exist in HIV/AIDS prevention knowledge and access to prevention services especially in the African refugee and immigrant population.

LESSONS LEARNED: The increase in incidence and prevalence rates of HIV in these communities could be attributed to failure of programs to address the different beliefs and cultural dynamics. Of note will be the underlying epidemic of stigma and discrimination that is also prevalent within this community. People with HIV can be stigmatized, ostracized, shunned and avoided. These constitute a major barrier to prevention

initiatives. Clearly, an urgent need exists to establish culturally appropriate and culturally competent interventions that target the African refugees and immigrant populations. There is also increased need for Technical Assistance to agencies serving this specific subpopulation.



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