PEPFAR Project That Keeps Girls HIV-Free Now Includes Kenya

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While in Kenya, President Obama announced that the country will be included in the DREAMS project that aims to lower HIV rates among girls and young women in up to 10 countries, Voice of America reports.

The DREAMS project is a $210 million collaboration between the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the Nike Foundation, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Kenya will receive $30 million in additional HIV funds that will go to the DREAMS project, supporting programs that are already in place.

DREAMS stands for "Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored and Safe."

U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator Deborah Birx, MD, who oversees PEPFAR, told Voice of America that although rates of new HIV infections in sub-Saharan have fallen in the past decade, the total number of people living with the virus has increased.

"Africa also has this exciting, expanding young adult [population]," she explained. "So, there are 30 percent more young adults now than at the beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. So, you can see just by the sheer numbers, even if you hold the rates of HIV new infections at the same [level], because there's so many more young adults at risk, your actual number of HIV infected goes significantly up."

Birx noted that stigma and discrimination remain the biggest challenges to helping girls and young women living with HIV.

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