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**UL-PIRE Certificates  
426 Students**

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**F**our hundred twenty-six elementary and junior high school students from four schools were last week certificated after completing an eight-week behavioral-driven intervention program on the prevention of HIV/AIDS, STD and unsafe sex, organized by University of Liberia (UL)-Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE).

Students who successfully completed the eight-week module came

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# UL-PIRE

from Weltona Christian School in Dupont Road, Paynesville Community School in Joe-Bar, Paynesville, Gaye Town Public School in Old Road and E. J. Johnson Public School from New Kru Town.

According to the Director of the program, Jenice K. Tegli, students from Paynesville Community School and the Emmanuel Johnson School were taught *How to Make Proud and Responsible Choices for a Better Future*, under the theme, 'A Safer Sex Approach to HIV and Teen Pregnancy Prevention.'

Students from Weltona Christian School in Dupont Road and Gaye Town Public School in Old Road also benefited from *General Health Program*, about preventive health information on malaria, tuberculosis, malnutrition, worm infestation, HIV knowledge, diarrhea, cholera, among others.

On Thursday after the certification, Mrs. Sinlee Barba, a MPC program facilitator told the *Daily Observer* that children were able to discuss their goals and dreams, the result and meaning of sex, understanding peer, partner and adult pressures and condoms, demonstration and effective negotiation and refusal skills.

"The making of proud and responsible choice for a better future is mainly intended to prevent HIV/STD and the risk-

associated behavior and help the participants to identify behaviors that place people at risk contracting sexually transmitted infections, including HIV infection and pregnancy. The module is also aimed at encouraging participants to start thinking positively about their future now and help them understand that their present behavior will have an impact on their future," Mrs. Barba averred.

For his part, GHP facilitator Roland B. Martin stressed that the participants learnt the common health conditions affecting youths in communities and prevention knowledge and skills about some deadly diseases, ranging from malaria to HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy and their goals and dreams in their respective lives.

The Director and co-Principal Investigation of UL-PIRE told journalists that the Liberia School-based HIV/AIDS, STD prevention program is aimed to prevent infectious diseases and unsafe sex amongst 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students from eight schools in Monrovia, based on a random controlled trial (RCT).

Mr. Harris averred that the 426 students from the four schools were administered an eight-week modified version of a behavioral-driven science based intervention program and would be evaluated after three months, and then after six months and then a year, in which the research would be completed.

"The Liberia School-Based

HIV/STD Prevention program is funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) of the US Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS). Hopefully, the two-year HIV/STD Prevention program at schools will come to an end next year, while the community program will be climaxed in 2012.

"We want to thank the parents for allowing their children to be part of the HIV/STD prevention research program and we expect at the end of the program for our kids to say 'NO' to unsafe sex and have a healthy future," Mr. Harris accentuated.

Meanwhile on Wednesday, March 4, 2009, the UL-PIRE began teaching another set of students from Maitilda Newport High School from New Port Street, Marvii Sonjie in Clara Town, Allen Glen School on 12<sup>th</sup> street, Sinkor, and Boatswain on Jamaica Road about the prevention of HIV/AIDS, STD and unsafe sex.

The UL-PIRE Africa Center is located on the campus of A.M. Dogliotti College of Medicine of the University of Liberia in Sinkor behind the compound of St. Joseph's Catholic Hospital.

The Center is the first HIV/STD prevention research center to be established at the UL, aimed at conducting prevention and clinical-based projects in infectious diseases.