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ENGAGE Announces Thai Academics and Activists Traveling to United States for U.S.-Thai Free Trade Agreement Speaking Tour

Washington, D.C., October 2006 - Three representatives from Thailand's growing Thai Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (TNP+) will speak October 12 to 17 at several events in Washington, D.C.

The touring representatives include AIDS Access Foundation leader and activist, Sangsiri Teemanka; Vice President of the Thai Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (TNP+), Boripat Donmon; and associate professor at the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Jiraporn Limpananont. Their primary purpose in coming to the United States is to initiate dialogue between Thai and U.S. citizens concerning the pending Thai-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA). They will especially address predicted effects of the Thai-U.S. FTA on International Property Rights (IPRs) and therefore, access to medication in Thailand.

In addition to Sangsiri Teemanka's current work with TNP+ and FTA Watch, she is part of the AIDS ACCESS Foundation (AAF), with whom she has designed and implemented training projects such as sex education for secondary school students, opportunistic infections and antiretroviral therapy, and counseling and behavior change. She has also worked on successful campaigns to incorporate anti-retroviral medication (ARV) into the Thai public health system, the Bristol-Meyer-Squibb (BMS) court case to revoke the patent on ddI in Thailand, and recently, campaigns to oppose the application by Glaxo-Smith-Kline (GSK) for a patent on Combivir in Thailand. At the 14th International AIDS conference (IAC) in Bangkok, Teemanka played a large role in initiating the concept of the global village, now a permanent fixture of the IAC.

Jiraporn Limpananont has been an integral member and academic advisor to the 'Drug Study Group,' a network of university academics who fights to improve and protect access to medications and the Health and Development Foundation, who worked with others to successfully campaign against the GSK patent application on "Combivir" in Thailand. The Drug Study Group was also part of the ultimately successful, 3-year long lawsuit filed against BMS, which resulted in the revocation of the BMS ddI patent. Limpananont expresses her concern for access to medication through her numerous publications about TRIPS, drug patents, the Thai health system, and implications of a Thai-U.S. FTA. She is also a member of FTA Watch, a coalition formed under concern for the non-transparent manner in which FTA negotiations were being conducted by the Thai government.

Boripat Donmon has worked for PLHA since 1999. He was a committee member of the community advisory board on vaccine trials in Thailand from 2004-2005 and participated in lobbying for the creation of a national Thai health security scheme by leading a campaign to gather 50,000 signatures. He has been living with HIV for 13 years, but campaigns with other parties unduly affected by the Thai-U.S. FTA such as farmers. He participated in protests during FTA negotiation rounds in Thailand, and his travels to Hong Kong with agricultural workers and representatives of slum networks to protest the 2005 WTO meeting inspired him to his present work, ensuring access to second line medication in Thailand.

For additional information on the Thai-U.S. FTA Speaking Tour contact Kyra Busch or visit www.engagetheworld.org.

ENGAGE builds the next generation of global citizens by translating the study abroad experience into lifelong connections and cooperative action between peoples and social movements working toward a just and sustainable world.

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