

## Int'l donors to slash HIV funding to region

Caribbean countries need to put aside at least one per cent of their income if they are to effectively fight the HIV epidemic as international donors cut resources to the region, according to Karl Theodore of the Centre for Health Economics at the University of the West Indies, St Augustine, Trinidad.

Theodore, in his address to delegates at the 2011 Caribbean HIV Conference now underway at Atlantis Paradise Island, Bahamas, said international donors are expected to slash funding to the region by a half.

"These resources are drying up," Theodore said.

The region, he added further, has the opportunity to demonstrate how seriously they are taking the HIV epidemic.

"One per cent is not a big amount and if we believe in seriousness of what is facing us we will respond," he said, adding that HIV if not managed will destroy countries' income and gross domestic product (GDP).

He said persons responsible for allocating resources in these respective countries will have to be convinced that the epidemic is a serious one.

"We must take ownership of the epidemic...it is our problem so let's put aside our resources to deal with it," he told delegates .

Theodore said the Caribbean has always been in a position to finance its own management of the disease but has grown overly dependent on external donors.

"The donors have agreed that the time has come when countries have to look within themselves to fund the epidemic," he said.

In pointing to some countries' availability to fund the HIV response, Theodore said one Caribbean country spent US\$50 million between 2002 to 2009 on HIV management. This, he said, was in comparison to the \$135 billion total income of that country over the same period.

"The allocation to HIV was therefore less than 0.05 per cent," he said.

According to Theodore, some countries are spending way below what they are to be spending.

"We are at a time in this region in our response where I think that if we are really serious we have to make up our mind to bear the (financial) burden of the response," he said, adding that the bulk of revenue has to come from within our own countries.