

# Bananas about AIDS

 [blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2007/08/08/a-cake-sale-to-cure-aids/](http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2007/08/08/a-cake-sale-to-cure-aids/)

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In the first of a series of guest-blogs by [POLIS Summer School](#) students *Hannah Citron* reflects on a session where we attempted to create a media for development strategy for the impoverished West African state of [Gambia](#), which is currently led by President Yahya Jammeh, a man who claims to be able to 'cure' AIDS.



In a country infested with the AIDS/HIV pandemic, the Gambian president assures his people that the ailments can be cured with an all-natural remedy, using the small African country's natural resources rather than invasive, costly treatments the poor inhabitants cannot afford. This natural remedy consists of nothing more than a banana-based paste, which the Gambian President claims will rid the affected individual of AIDS/HIV within two to three days. With so many suffering, banana paste as the proposed cure for one of the most malignant and fatal diseases of our generation?

Let's be serious. Outside media sources need to infiltrate Gambian borders to educate the masses about AIDS/HIV, proper treatment, and of course, prevention. To do this, the state of journalism has to change in Gambia. The low quality of journalism has to improve. We need to give journalists inside and outside Gambia the desire to report on this pertinent issue. Perhaps creating a Journalism Centre for both Gambian and Foreign Journalists would be helpful. The centre could serve as a media watch to see if the media is reporting issues fairly and objectively, or if journalists are being bribed by the government to make ludicrous statements claiming that the banana paste can cure HIV/AIDS. Radio shows or TV shows should be created to serve the 'infotainment' purpose, creating a teen-aged range program alerting the Gambian youth of contraceptives and the practice of safe sex, which would greatly lower their risk of contracting AIDS or HIV.

All in all, the journalism in Gambia needs to be much less restricted by the government and people should have the choice to make informed decisions. That being said, perhaps the establishment of a Journalism school in Gambia would also be lucrative for all the Gambian inhabitants.

by Hannah Citron

The [POLIS](#) report on Media for Development is [here](#)

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