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1) **Announcing GYCA's New South Secretariat! Accra, Ghana**

After an extensive search process, we are pleased to announce GYCA's new South Secretariat (SS), based in Accra, Ghana! Initially, the South Secretariat will be coordinated by one staff person and one intern. A selection committee comprised of GYCA Task Force members from the Global North and South chose Ghana as the new location after extensive research.

Sydney Hushie, GYCA's National Focal Point for Ghana, will lead the office. GYCA will be sharing an office with Global Youth Action Network Ghana. Please read more about Sydney at <http://profiles.takingitglobal.org/sydhush>. Sydney has already been corresponding with local organizations to garner support for the SS, including with UNFPA Ghana and World Bank Ghana. UNFPA Headquarters has kindly provided seed funding.

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The SS is intended to be an equal partner to the North Secretariat, to ensure a global dialogue and meaningful representation. SS responsibilities include (but not limited to) providing support to 5 African Regional Focal Points, improving regional outreach, organizing local gatherings and campaigns, and preparing for ICASA in Dakar, Senegal, 2008.

2) **Regional News**

Latin America: GYCA members participate in the Latin American Forum on HIV/AIDS

This month, Buenos Aires hosted the fourth Latin American Forum on HIV/AIDS, the largest event on HIV/AIDS in Latin America. Compared to the third Forum, two years ago in El Salvador, youth participation has clearly increased. More scholarships were awarded to young people, and more abstracts related to youth issues and HIV were accepted.



GYCA members speak on a Youth Panel

GYCA's Regional Focal Point for Latin America, Ricardo Baruch, moderated the working groups on Youth and HIV/AIDS during the Community Forum and Rodrigo Olin, GYCA member from Mexico, served as rapporteur for youth activities during the event. In addition, Cristian Landeta from Ecuador; Jose Guillen from Venezuela; Mariana Ballesteros and Claudio Reuter from Argentina; Violeta Ross and Julio Cesar Aguilera from Bolivia; Luis Rivera from Colombia, and other GYCA members attended the conference.

On April 16th, several Latin American GYCA members participated in the Youth Meeting organized by Fundación Huesped and Moverte. The meeting aimed to advance a better response to the HIV pandemic in the region and create advocacy strategies for future Forums and the International AIDS Conference, which will be held for the first time in the region in Mexico City in August 2008.

Youth attendees from various networks are now working to increase meaningful youth participation in the next Forum in 2009. Though youth participation is minimal at the moment, with advocacy and lobbying efforts, GYCA members hope to shift the attitudes away from addressing young people only as beneficiaries and towards seeing youth as a group who can truly change the course of the HIV pandemic.

The Caribbean: GYCA Participates in new "Live Up" Campaign!



Live Up is a massive HIV/AIDS advocacy-media campaign that was launched on the dawn of the 2007 ICC Cricket World Cup Series, which are being hosted in the Caribbean over a nine week period.

Nneka Norville, Live Up Project Director, has asked GYCA's Caribbean Regional Focal Point, Rayonne Pile, to be a resource person for LiveUp in the Caribbean, as part of her quest to spread the initiative and to ground its work in already existing agencies and organizations.

GYCA's work will be highlighted on the website and paths will be created to ensure future collaborative work. The Live Up campaign brings together the resources and coverage of over thirty five media corporations within the fifteen countries of the Caribbean to share information and spread positive words in support of removing the stigma and discrimination faced by people living with HIV/AIDS.

The interactive website also allows anyone from within the region to share his or her story of how they are engaging in the fight against HIV/AIDS, with information on the status of the fifteen member states of the Caribbean. It also utilizes customized performances, messages and music videos from some of the big names in the music industry in the Caribbean such as Rupee, Elephant Man, Edwin Yearwood, Bunji Garlin and others.

Eastern Europe and Central Asia: HIV/AIDS Peer Education Training for High School Students!

Trainings were organized in Macedonia in response to a recent country scandal, where high school youth from Skopje and Bitola filmed sex scenes in schools on their mobile phones. The mobile clips started to circle around the country and soon became top stories on all TV channels and media outlets.



The team of newly trained peer educators

The training was organized with the initiative of the only medical high school in that part of the country, in order to train 10 young people to conduct peer education on HIV/AIDS and STIs in Bitola.

The HIV/AIDS peer education training gathered 10 carefully selected young people for three days in late March to meet in Strumica. The participants were trained on how to effectively educate their peers on HIV/AIDS and STI basics. With the support

of local TV stations in Bitola, they are expected to organize TV shows to increase awareness among young people, their parents and local community stakeholders on the importance of having open conversations on HIV/AIDS and STIs.

Every participant in the peer education training is now obliged to conduct at least eight local gatherings with his/her peers. All the gatherings were scheduled to be in the first half of April.

Middle East: Youth Camp



GYCA members offer information and answer questions from their booth after the training

Recently, GYCA members in Egypt held a training for over 400 youth from various regions of the country. The GYCA training team was formed of six members (three males and three females) from three different governorates in Egypt. They divided into four groups to discuss basic information about HIV/AIDS, how to protect oneself and how to get tested. The team addressed fears and questions addressing stigma toward the disease and people living with HIV/AIDS.

Using the Political Advocacy manual from GYCA's e-courses materials, the team presented a session about the role of youth in the community and different approaches they can use to address their community needs. During this session, advocacy was stressed as an effective tool, discussed different types of advocacy and the possible targets. Participants discussed problems that young people face, especially those related to HIV/AIDS, what would be the best way to address those problems and what we – young people – expect from decision makers.

Finally the group came up with their recommendations and one of them was chosen to present those recommendations at the closing ceremony of the event. The team helped them prepare a simple power point presentation and one of them presented it at the ceremony in front of the religious leaders, decision makers attending and all his young peers.



Two factors made this Youth Camp a remarkable event. First, it was a youth-to-youth event; five youth-led networks in Egypt led and coordinated the event, while the National AIDS Program along with most of the UN agencies played a supportive and supervisory role. Secondly, it was fascinating how 400 young people from 11 governorates all over Egypt presented a variety of cultural diversities and traditions and therefore different attitudes towards HIV/AIDS issues, but they were all eager to learn more and work together.

West Africa: Peer Education Training



Peer Peer Education training, Wailo, Bauchi State, Nigeria.

In Nigeria, a new set of peer education trainers from Bauchi State joined forces with GYCA. March 19th was a memorable day at the orientation camp in the town of Wailo. 75 youth corps members who successfully completed the six day long intensive peer education training course had their graduation ceremony.

Corps members were trained as ambassadors of change on HIV/AIDS prevention and care, with the primary mandate of raising a new cohort of adolescents as peer educators. Opeyimi Yekini, a GYCA member and one of the master trainers, presented information on the Coalition's global network to participants. On the day of their graduation, participants joined the coalition and promised to contribute immensely towards achieving the specific set objectives of GYCA.

South Asia: Upcoming Capacity Development Workshop For Positive Leaders

In observation of the "International AIDS Candle Light Memorial Day," the Indian Social Awareness Service Organization (SASO) and Manipur Network of Positive People (MNP+) will jointly organize a three day Capacity Development Workshop for positive leaders in northeast India from 18th to 20th May, 2007.

The current capacity of positive leaders in northeast India has been an ongoing challenge and a topic that has come up repeatedly in discussion. While networks of people living with HIV have been established in most parts of the region, most of these networks do not have the necessary capacity to run their organizations effectively.

In order to build effective and strong PLWHA organizations which can implement effective projects, the organizers are planning a two-pronged approach to the workshop. First, they aim to develop the

skills of all positive people, in particular positive leaders. Skills building is required in the areas of organizational management, financial planning, self-care, communication skills and effective group management.

Secondly, MNP+ and SASO recognize that more work needs to be done to strengthen the institutional capacity of PLWHA groups. This involves focusing on creating clear objectives and goals for the groups, governance, sustainable and diverse funding sources, accountability, financial management, monitoring and evaluation methods and drafting constitutions and rules that comply with relevant country laws.

This workshop is essential to helping positive leaders more effectively run their organizations. It will also support MNP+ and SASO's vision of improving the lives of PLWHA throughout northeast India.

Asia Pacific: Upcoming ICAAP Conference

The 8th International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific (ICAAP) will be held in Sri Lanka, from August 19th -23rd, 2007. Prior to the Main Congress, a one-day Youth Forum will be held to train youth participants to be effective conference participants.

In a big step forward for youth at ICAAP, both this year's and last year's GYCA RFPs for the Asia Pacific Region, Tsutomu Nemoto (Japan) and Nino Susanto (Indonesia) were selected as abstract reviews.

Some of the GYCA members (mainly GYCA NFPs for Asia Pacific and South Asia) are applying to oral sessions and skills building both at the Youth Forum and the Main Congress. We look forward to more youth friendly sessions occurring at the Main Congress.

3) E-Course News Flash

GYCA's e-courses are now being run through Taking It Global (TIG)'s innovative on-line classrooms, "TIGed". Previously, e-courses were run on a TIG project page. The new e-course classrooms allow students to submit assignments on-line, monitor assignment due dates, post to student blogs, and visit a centralized "blackboard" to view course announcements. Stay tuned to the GYCA website for the debut of the new e-course alumni blog, which will allow graduates to update the GYCA community on their projects.

4) GYCA Fundraiser

On Wednesday, May 23, GYCA will be holding a fundraiser from 6:30-9:30pm at Mannhatta (at Bleecker Street in New York City). If you are in New York, we hope you will join us! If you can't attend, please visit our website to donate online: <http://www.youthaidscoalition.org/donate.html>

5) Youth Projects from Oxfam Youth Partnerships

GYCA and Oxfam International Youth Partnerships sent out a call for case studies highlighting innovative, youth-led approaches to HIV/AIDS. Over the next three newsletters we will be sharing the top 12 projects with you. These 12, selected from over 80, have received a small financial award toward their project activities.

Youth Empowerment and Child Labor Elimination Project: Working in truck stop communities, Nigeria

In 2004, the Youth Empowerment and Child Labor Elimination Project (YCEP), launched a three-year HIV Prevention Program aimed at reducing the vulnerability of out-of-school youth to HIV/AIDS and STIs. The project targeted youth living in three truck-stop communities in Cross River State, which has the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence in Nigeria, largely due to unprotected sexual contact between truckers passing through the area and local adolescent girls from whom they purchase sexual favors.

The project aimed to educate girls on reproductive health issues, empower them with skills to negotiate abstinence and safer sex, and to secure the commitment of community leaders to promote safer sexual lifestyles.



Youth members of the YCEP campaign at a rally

To begin, project organizers visited each of the communities to build relationships and trust between the community and the project team. Organizers held focus groups with those at high risk of infection - adolescent girls and truck drivers - as well as adolescent boys, parents, and community members, in order to assess the community's current level of reproductive health and HIV/AIDS education. The team visited community leaders to gain their support and to encourage them to play a leadership role within the project.

To mobilize youth, build their confidence to promote healthy decisions individually and in their communities, and to train peer educators who would in turn train other youth, "Village Square" workshops were organized in each community. The workshops used a variety of methods, including role-plays, group work and participatory facilitation.

A total of 80 peer educators were trained, including five commercial sex workers. The workshops emphasized delaying sexual debut, negotiating for and consistently using condoms and sticking to a single partner. One recurring problem in the three workshops was the cultural conservatism surrounding sex and the resulting inability to discuss sex-related issues openly. During the workshop at Uyangha, a young girl remarked, "We don't discuss it, but we do it. Now I know that it is dangerous."

HIV/AIDS awareness rallies were held in the three communities. In Uyangha and Abakpa, the rallies coincided with an annual new yam festival in order to reach as many people as possible. Volunteers handed out over 5,000 condoms, and approximately 7,000 informative fliers and stickers. Brightly colored posters generated useful discussions on the issue of HIV/AIDS. Some of the messages were conveyed in the local language, and an estimated 15,000 people, both young and old, were reached through the rallies.

The project highlighted the value of strategic planning, alliance building, and utilizing community assets. The direct participation of community youth in the project, the youth-led approach, and the project's ability to work within the framework of existing community structures (such as age-grades and faith-based youth groups) have contributed to the project's sustainability and effectiveness. However, unless concerted efforts are made to scale-up the intervention across the entire transport corridor, HIV rates may rapidly re-surge, though early results have shown the project has contributed significantly to curbing the spread of HIV/AIDS within the State.

The Liberian Dance Troupe (LDT), Ghana

During the 14-year civil war in Liberia, which ended in 2003, 400,000 Liberians fled the conflict in their country to neighboring West African countries 42,000 of those Liberian refugees live in the Buduburam Refugee Camp in Ghana, including 18,000 children. Based in the Buduburam Camp, the Liberian Dance Troupe (LDT) project uses theatre and dance as tools to maintain Liberian culture among young refugee children, and to educate them about HIV/AIDS, teen pregnancy, and drug abuse.

The Liberian Dance Troupe in action

Over 100 refugee youth have been trained in theatre, the arts, oral and written literature, dance and music. In turn, these youth train their peers in primary schools located within the camp. In this way, Liberian youth refugees receive the psychosocial rehabilitation and education necessary to improve their security, self-confidence, dignity, and identity. Specific objectives addressed by the organization are how to survive economic stress without having sex, how to avoid the transmission of any disease if having sex, and caring for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA).

LDT visits four schools weekly to increase HIV/AIDS awareness through cultural songs and dances. The awareness is reinforced on Saturdays when participants from targeted schools gather at the LDT



Centre. Before the introduction of new talents, the participants are first told the risk of having unsafe sex, as well as other opportunities (such as scholarships or jobs) to help young people better their lives. Recent improvements to the project include story telling and song recitals on the issue of HIV/AIDS related topics.

The LDT works with a team of 15 others, including consultants and health workers. A team, which consists of trainers, school administrators, and other stakeholders such as the West African Network for Peacebuilding, review the project's objectives and agreed terms with partners at every stage.

The project evaluation also relies on the periodic reports from health organizations and other agencies with reference to the objectives. Registers are maintained in the centre and targeted schools to track participants after every weekly training and practice. Peer reviews are conducted among trainers, participants, and beneficiaries at the interim and final stages of the practice. Parents also provide evaluations, as they regularly express satisfaction about their children's behavior change and academic improvements after viewing the cultural performances.

Resources required include the training of trainers and volunteers, leaflets and other research documents from related organizations, classrooms in schools, and the LDT center.



Young people are more willing to listen to and take advice from people their own age, as opposed to their elders, which accounts for the success of the project. Young leaders are also more likely to invent creative and appropriate projects to engage other young people. However, a major challenge faced by the LDT is the commitment of its members and participants, due to circumstances like teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, or school drop-outs, as a result of political, social, and economic situations in Ghana.

Earth and Youth Initiative, Nigeria: HIV/AIDS School Discussion Program

Earth and Youth Initiative is a non-governmental organization whose aim is to reach out to youth and help build a positive image of young people in society. The organization's work focuses on helping to create awareness on safe sex practices, HIV/AIDS, reproductive

health, career development, and peace building. These aims are achieved via several projects, including producing materials about HIV/AIDS awareness and education in different Nigerian languages, HIV/AIDS programs in schools, and networking with lawyers to help people living with HIV/AIDS.

The HIV/AIDS School/Youth Program organizes discussion groups to talk about issues faced by young people and relay accurate and appropriate information about sexual and reproductive health. The topics of the conversation are directed by the participants as well as by five facilitators.

The sessions focus on the modes of HIV transmission, how to protect against the disease, how participants can help spread accurate HIV/AIDS information to their peers, and how HIV/AIDS is a communal problem.

Other issues raised include abstinence, good health habits, alternate prevention methods, stigma, and discrimination. Information resources are also available for participants to access during the sessions and afterwards at their leisure.

Questionnaires are handed out to participants after the sessions in order to evaluate the discussion groups' effectiveness and help improve the sessions. The evaluation is run in collaboration with the school in order to have an independent assessment of the project. Despite its success, EYI acknowledges that not all young people have access to their programs, and are working on ways to reach other groups, such as street children.

6) Living Positively – Interviewing Johnny Guaylupo

“The important message is: ‘AIDS isn’t over until it’s over for everyone.’ And I’ll keep going until AIDS becomes history,” says 25 year old Johnny Guaylupo from New York City.

Growing Up - I was only 15 when I told one of the Catholic Brothers at school I was gay. He told me I was too young to choose - like it was a choice. Nobody explained about HIV and AIDS. We couldn't even bring up the issue of condoms in a conversation with the teachers.



The Older Man - “I started hanging out in the Village, the gay area of New York, where I met this older guy. I was young and fresh and I guess had low self-esteem. We started dating and having sex. I used condoms at first but after a while he stopped. I didn't know I was supposed to use condoms for this, that and the other. It was a



crazy time for me. My mom's boyfriend was murdered and I started to get into trouble. Some of my gay friends ran away from home and became sex workers. I was just involved with this older guy and coming home late and getting screamed at.

Diagnosis at 17- "Around that time I began to feel ill. I had stomach cramps so bad I went to the Emergency Room. I didn't want to go to my family doctor because I was doing so much I wasn't supposed to do. At the ER I told them I was gay and I agreed to some blood tests. At my follow up they sat me in room with a social worker, a nurse and a doctor. It was a grey, empty and scary room. They told me the HIV test had come back positive. I didn't know what being positive or negative meant. But I did know it wasn't good news. And I didn't know how I got it.

I told the Brother at school I was positive and he hooked me up with some great support at the Adolescent AIDS Program in the Bronx. But I started getting really depressed. I was hospitalized because I tried to commit suicide. I swallowed a whole bottle of Tylenol. I got to the ER and they pumped my stomach and I ended up in the psyche ward. When I was in the psyche ward I got a call from the guy I was seeing. He was crying and saying he was HIV positive. I started crying as well, saying 'We'll be together for ever' but I wondered how come I've just found out about my status and all of a sudden he's telling me he's HIV positive. I started to see the truth when I found papers about his previous boyfriend who had died from an AIDS-related illness. Then I got real angry, we argued and broke up."

Getting Involved, Taking Action- I realized I had to educate myself about HIV. I wanted to get involved, meet other HIV positive people and do something useful. I went to the Ryan White Youth Conference, the largest youth HIV program in the US. I met other young HIV positive people from around the country. I was nervous but felt safe because everyone was open about their status. I was inspired by the other young people there. I learned about peer education and safer sex and did volunteer work in the Bronx where the HIV rates among young people are real high. We'd do outreach and try and get people tested and give out information about HIV services and screening for STIs.

I was arrested at the UN in May 2006 at a civil disobedience demonstration about treatment access. We took a whole list of demands to the head of the US UN mission; more money for prevention, HIV drugs and peer educators and an end to HIV drug waiting lists in parts of the US. I was one of about 20 activists who chained ourselves together in the UN lobby shouting slogans. It was on TV everywhere. It was five years since the last UN general assembly on AIDS and in the meantime 15 million people had died of AIDS.

Working in AIDS Services - Now I work as an intake and case manager at Housing Works, the biggest community-based HIV organization in New York. We're running a day health care programme for HIV positive people. We also have a full medical staff of psychologists and psychiatrists. I get the word out and make sure we have more clients and enroll them."

Disclosure- When I started working at Housing Works I came out about my status and got a lot of support. Not only is the chief executive openly HIV positive but many of the staff members are as well. I feel comfortable now saying I'm HIV positive. I think back to what the Civil Rights Movement did in the 1960s when segregation was happening and it was non-violent civil disobedience which forced the change.

Young People Need Information- You can't control people's sexual impulses. You can't control hormones. So why not just teach us what we should do to be safe if we decide to have sex? All those abstinence programs the US is funding just do not work. They're against nature. Half the new HIV infections are among people between the ages of 16 and 25. So it's a young peoples' disease and also disproportionately affects women, African Americans, Latinos and the poor. It's crazy the government putting billions into abstinence. That's what they were teaching me at school. If young people do not have the right information, no wonder the HIV rates are going up.

The future- I'm happy working at Housing Works and hope to grow in the organization. And I eventually want to find someone and settle down, maybe adopt a child. That's my dream. My treatments are going well now. I'm on Truvada (FTC and Tenofovir), Reyataz (atazanavir) and Norvir (ritonavir) with an undetectable viral load and a CD4 count of 900 odd. I'm starting to work out at the gym again to get rid of my belly. And I'm feeling pretty optimistic about the future.



If you have information or material that is HIV/AIDS and youth focused, or if you know of any excellent examples of people working in HIV/AIDS intervention in your country and think they should be highlighted in our newsletter, please submit their information to info@youthaidscoalition.org.

Join GYCA by subscribing to GYCA's partner organization TakingITGlobal at www.takingitglobal.org and then sending a blank email to: gyca-subscribe@groups.takingitglobal.org.