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1) Spotlight

Logan Cochrane, an active GYCA member and e-course participant, is currently traveling throughout Central Africa working on a project titled "Working to Empower." His plan of the three-country education program for eight refugee camps this year that was also highlighted in the December 2005 Youth Awake! Newsletter. The project focuses on marginalized people and areas that lack education. He aims to set up a pool of youth peer-educators, who would continue the teaching process in their countries to achieve a degree of sustainability. Since local groups helped determine the actual process of the seminars and were themselves responsible for the support and continued enthusiasm, local empowerment was also associated with the entire process. During 2006, Working to Empower will hold HIV/AIDS seminars in DR Congo, Tanzania, and Benin. The programs themselves are targeting refugee peoples and youth in particular. The Congolese portion is now complete, and the workshops in two refugee camps in Tanzania about to begin. Work in Benin will occur later this year.

The program itself brought together a collection of focal people so as to use their networks to continue the sharing of information. Of sixty participants, twenty-eight were teachers and thirty-two were from local organizations. The idea of the seminar was collaboration to brainstorm and design local projects. An example was the joining of a radio journalist, a peer educator, and a member of the national HIV/AIDS program who got together to create a Q&A show for the local radio station. In conclusion, participants took part in a community wide celebration where local government and officials acknowledged the participants as community leaders.



A participant of the local Congolese organization (ArtHum) teaches his peers about the factors influencing HIV prevalence in Eastern DR Congo

Collaboration with Roots and Shoots, a component of The Jane Goodall foundation, in Tanzania and UNHCR in Benin will facilitate the expansion of the established programs. Up-coming work in Tanzania includes working with two groups of young people; a male-focused class on HIV/AIDS and a female-orientated class on maternal health and HIV/AIDS. Working to Empower also holds women's micro-finance programs and children's education programs. For more information please visit www.workingtoempower.org or contact Logan at logan_cochrane@hotmail.com.

2) GYCA RFP

We would like to introduce the new RFP for Southern Africa – Congratulations to Amos Mwale from Zambia!



Amos, 26, has earned a BA (Hon) in Youth and Community Education at the University of Huddersfield. He is a co-author and research team leader of the Zambia Country Report for the 2004 GYCA/ Global Youth Partners publication, *Our Voice, Our Future: Young People Report on Progress Made on the UNGASS Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS*. He is also the Project Director for Youth Vision Zambia

and the co-founder and Coordinator of Capacity Building and Training for Lentswe La Rona (“Our Voice”), a network of Young African Advocates working with other young people for improving the lives of youth in Africa. Amos was Zambia's Youth representative to the United Nations General Assembly for the World Programme of Action for Youth Meeting in 2005 in New York. He has presented a number of papers on a local and international level including the Roundtable Countdown 2015 on Reproductive Health meeting in London 2004, the XV International Conference on HIV/AIDS in Thailand 2004, the ICPD/IPPF Africa Regional Roundtable Countdown 2015 in Kenya 2004, the United Nations Economic and Social Council high level meeting in Dakar, the 2nd African Conference on Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS in Cape Town and Towards an Africa without Borders in USA at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He has also served as a moderator on a number of international meetings such as: Breaking Through workshop 10 years since Cairo in Sweden, the Global Youth Gathering in United Arab Emirates and the Africa Advocacy workshop by the Youth Coalition and Youth Against AIDS Network. He currently sits on a number of HIV/AIDS committees in Zambia including the Zambia National Youth Development Council.

3) Toronto IAC Update

Planning for the AIDS 2006 Youth Pre-Conference, taking place from August 10 – 12 in Toronto, Canada, is well on its way. The GYCA North Secretariat, in conjunction with the GYCA Local Coordinator in Toronto, Incia Khan, ensured that all 250 spots at the Pre-Conference are taken and that all 35 facilitators and presenters are confirmed. The average age is about 24 years old although the age ranges from 16 to 26. Participants were selected based on their confirmed registration at the XVI International AIDS Conference (August 13 -18), and priority has been given to youth of disproportionately affected populations, from developing countries and who demonstrate relevant experience in HIV/AIDS. Applications are no longer being considered for the Pre-Conference. There are 21 unique sessions taking place at the Pre-Conference; ranging from trade issues; science sessions; capacity building in media, research and monitoring and evaluation; prevention best practices; updates on antiretroviral treatment; and prevention of mother-to-child transmission.

Key sessions include *What Works in Youth-Focused Evidence-based Prevention?* a launch of a report by the World Health Organization about evidence-based prevention; *Coverage and*

Costs of Youth-focused Prevention Efforts by the Futures Group. Christian Gladel from the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI) and Shaleena Theophilus of the Canadian AIDS Society have teamed up for a great session on *New Preventative Technologies*; Rick Olson from UNICEF and Sergey Federov of the All Ukrainian Network of Positive People as well as a member from the UNFPA Y-Peer team will team up for a session on *Outreach and Prevention among Marginalized Youth Groups*. We are also very excited to add another session last week called *Strategic Communications for Behavior Change as a Networking Tool* led by Mr. Alexander Bodiroza of UNFPA. Other organizations involved include Save the Children Canada, CHANGE, Tanzanian Youth Network, Advocates for Youth, Interagency Coalition on AIDS and Development, Family Health International, Student Global AIDS Campaign, Oxfam International Youth Parliament Trade Justice Group, Interagency Coalition on AIDS and Development, Alan Guttmacher Institute, Toronto Health Network and members from the Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS, including Joya Banerjee, Ramy Nasr, Ricardo Baruch and Edford Mutuma to name a few.

4) GYCA Members Presenting at AIDS2006 –

Two GYCA members who will be represented at the IAC include:

1) **Gram Bharati Samiti (GBS)**, a development non-profit in Jaipur, India, will be represented by a Peace Tiles mural (www.peacetiles.net), which was originally made and exhibited for World AIDS Day 2005 in India. GBS organized 6 tile-making workshops at 46 schools in various locations around Rajasthan, and also a December 1st conference, at which the resulting murals were unveiled. Present were representatives of government, media, civil society, nonprofits, the education sector, and the business community.



In all, hundreds of youth participated, producing several hundred tiles (collages on small squares of wood) which have been assembled into murals and shown at a number of national and international locations. Some of those murals are now on permanent display in schools and the children's wings of several local hospitals. GBS also hosted an

international mural composed of tiles made in other countries, and one of its murals was shown for WAD 2005 at the Marquette Children's Museum in Michigan, USA. In Toronto, an Indian mural will be displayed as part of the Youth Program activities. (For more information, contact Bhawani Kusum, Exec. Director at gbsbsk@sancharnet.in or visit www.gbsjp.org). For more on the Indian tiles, see: <http://www.telecommunity.us/peacetiles/taxonomy/menu/5/23>

2) Bill Clinton Care (B'Care), a development non-profit in Hyderabad, India, uses art as a form of edutainment to prevent further transmission of HIV/AIDS. It will have two activities at the IAC: a body painting event, and creation and display of a mural. Body painting is an innovative and fun experience which teaches tolerance and the power of touch, and helps to break down barriers and reduce stigma. It involves painting, dancing, and music by DJs. This activity should result in more positive thinking and positive living because it becomes clearer that everyone is interdependent and connected in some way, and that we can all work together for the greater good, especially in ways that are creative, uplifting, and enjoyable. There will hopefully be 200 "artists" and 300 spectators for this event.

A mural (wall painting) for the purpose of creating awareness about HIV/AIDS will also be created. The goal of the project is to create awareness about the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and will involve young artists and B'Care, with help from Canadian muralist, Javid Alibhai, and hopefully people living with HIV/AIDS, women and men, and anyone interested! (Contact Surya Makarla, billclintoncare@gmail.com for more details or visit www.bcaindia.org)

5) Best Practices Handbook –

34 African GYCA members showcased as part of the debut of the African Youth HIV/AIDS Best Practices Handbook, a collection featuring 95 youth-created and/or youth-led (sometimes in conjunction with adult allies) HIV/AIDS prevention and education activities from all parts of the continent. Two of the Handbook partners, Dabesaki MacIkemenjima (Development Partnership International) and Janet Feldman (ActALIVE, KAIPPG International) are GYCA co-founders, the latter as an adult ally. More on this project can be seen at www.developmentpartnership.org. The Handbook will be available in PDF, CD-ROM, and hard-copy, and will also be showcased online soon. The debut will take place on August 16th (exact details forthcoming).

6) Local Gatherings

GYCA Regional Focal Points (RFPs), National Focal Points (NFPs) and members/e-course participants are now holding Local Gatherings within their regions and cities. These are networking opportunities to inform other local youth organizations about the HIV/AIDS issues and involve them in community-based and/or national-level campaigns. These will also provide space for sharing the visions of the HIV/AIDS youth movement locally, regionally and globally in order to create a self-sustaining network of young people in their communities.

Reports of some GYCA Local Gatherings:

*Mexico City, Mexico – Mexfam Revolution Site:
Thursday, May 25th*



Ricardo Baruch, Latin America RFP, organized a local gathering with young people in Mexico City. Participants were from Mexican NGOs working on SRH and HIV/AIDS

prevention; most of them working specifically on youth issues. The gathering started off with a presentation on the structure of GYCA, current framework and expectations with a series of questions that followed. Ricardo then talked about his experience being on the Mexican Government Delegation for the UNGASS review meeting in New York and showed relevant reports and statistics. Despite the fact that most UNGASS commitments were not met by the Mexican government, it was recognized that some specific actions for young people had been achieved. Ricardo then explained the context of the International AIDS Conferences and specifically AIDS 2006 in Toronto. One of the participants submitted an abstract and applied for a scholarship but did not receive it. Eight people from Mexico are attending the IAC. Everyone was informed about the youth Pre-Conference and the work that the Toronto YouthForce and GYCA are doing. The gathering ended with a fruitful discussion about local youth participation and how young people fit in the future after the federal elections in July. (Contact Ricardo@youthaidscoalition.org for more details).



Skopje, Macedonia – MIA Roma Education and Research Centre: Friday, April 21st

Miodraga Stefanovska, NFP from Macedonia, organized a local gathering with about 22 participants in Skopje from local Roma NGOs. The gathering was



organized to hold a one-day HIV/AIDS education session. The session was conducted by peer educators from MIA with previous experience in Roma peer education. The idea of the session was to inform young people about basic HIV/AIDS information (transmission, prevention, statistics, etc.) through an interactive discussion and games. One of the main topics of the session was the average age of first sexual intercourse, as studies show that Roma youth often begin their sex life at an early age. Most of the participants agreed that since abstinence is a part of their tradition, they mostly engage in anal or oral sexual behavior. A discussion led to how participants can reach more of their peers. Mia and her team plan to have a follow-up session in July with male Roma adolescents. (Contact vesnamia@osi.net.mk for more details).

Toronto, Canada – TakingITGlobal Office: Thursday, July 13th



Marco Gomes, North America RFP, organized a Local Gathering to introduce GYCA members to networking opportunities and other youth-led projects/programs. The Gathering also served as a predecessor to the IAC 2006 in Toronto. GYCA members were able to share the programs and involvement in the upcoming IAC as well as distribute

print material to other attendees. Seven presenters talked about their organizations and work. The gathering was a networking opportunity for youth leaders and connected those involved in the struggle against HIV/AIDS. A contact network will derive from the Gathering and will allow all those involved to have more access to relatively local resources and information that will help all of us in our endeavors. (Contact marco@youthaidscoalition.org for more details).

If you are interested in participating and/or organizing a local gathering, please contact info@youthaidscoalition.org.

7) E-course Update –

We are currently in the middle of the June-July Project Management e-course and the July-August Grant Proposal Writing and Fundraising e-course. Facilitators are in the process of revising the structure and format of the e-courses, based on past experiences and evaluations. The advocacy e-course in May resulted in great action plans.

For example, Luan Bicaj of Prishtina, Kosovo is working on an HIV/AIDS awareness-raising campaign for youth, through the use of such resources as the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport; the Institute for Public Health of Kosovo; NGOs engaged in public health; and donors involved in the area of HIV/AIDS – he aims to increase the number of protective measures against HIV/AIDS while decreasing the number of HIV/AIDS cases that occur. Josephine Wanja of Nairobi, Kenya is currently working on addressing stigma within the youth community living with HIV/AIDS at a grassroots level, which will improve peer education within youths for intervention against the spreading of HIV/AIDS. Dennis Kateregga of Kampala, Uganda is working on a campaign to increase youth participation in HIV/AIDS awareness-raising activities, by way of a political breakfast and networking opportunity. Good luck with your great plans!

The e-courses will resume after the Toronto IAC in September so watch out on the GYCA forum and website for more details about the next course.

8) Organization Profile –

The Salvation Army - India Northern Territory

The Salvation Army has been responding to HIV/AIDS and health issues in the community for many years with active participation of young people in the process. The response to young people in care, prevention, awareness

and support to people living with HIV/AIDS and their families is a challenging mission. However, with the help of young volunteers, the Salvation Army churches, covering over ten states in Northern India, have been active with HIV/AIDS and other community health issues. Currently there are more than 46 active young people under the age of 25 that do regular home visits of HIV infected households and families. They provide care, support, awareness and discuss other social issues.

The main community issues and concerns that young people found were that the number of HIV/AIDS infections, alcoholism and drug addictions among young people, illicit sexual relationships among community members and other issues like illiteracy, poverty, are at a rise in the community. Unemployment, child marriage and trafficking of women and children for domestic work are also at an increase. However, the changes brought about by the Salvation Army volunteers were more awareness resulting in more young people joining the team and talking about the HIV/AIDS and other risky behaviors. There are women participating in the community meeting and discuss sex and sexuality with the female facilitators. The local team has stated HIV/AIDS Counseling centre for the community. Ultimately, young people have gradually decreased visits to red light areas, and are more concerned about caring for their families resulting in some income generation activities for unemployed youth and advocate about the against child marriages and trafficking. Log on to www.salvationarmy.org or contact Sana Meitram at smeitram2004@yahoo.co.in for more details.

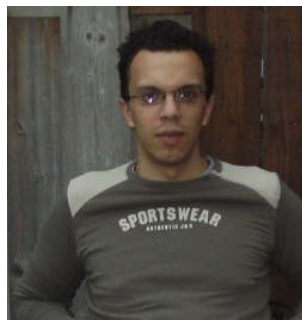
9) Regional News –

Gay Pride Parades and HIV/AIDS in Latin America

Thousands of people “came out” to the streets to make social changes during June, with thousands of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, drags, trans, queers, etc. people demonstrating in the streets of the capitals and main cities all along the continent: Caracas, Lima, Panama, Bogotá, Santiago, etc. Due to the high rates of gay PLWHA in Latin America, the sexual diversity movement has always been very close to the HIV/AIDS social movements. The gay parades represent a great opportunity to make visible the HIV/AIDS related problems such as the stigma and discrimination. They are also a good chance for civil society organizations to show their work and to make prevention actions in huge GLBT gatherings of more than 100,000 people in cities like São Paulo, México and Buenos Aires. In most of the Latin American countries homosexuality is not forbidden and specific campaigns do exist to prevent HIV/AIDS and STIs

among gay people and MSMs but the social stigma for both groups is a big problem still everywhere. The new “leftist” governments in the region seem to be more worried about the sexual health and sexual rights but not much has been achieved so far.

10) Living Positively – Interviewing Marco Gomes



“I have confidence in myself; I can’t be deterred by family concerns. I care more about the people I affect positively and they depend on what I do and see how I’ve been able to live above stigma and discrimination. Therefore I forget those things which are behind me and press on to the mark of my vision to save lives and to see a world devoid of stigma” says 26

year-old Marco from Canada while he relives the last four years of his life living positively.

How I got infected – My ex-boyfriend infected me. I was in love when we decided to engage in intercourse without a condom. I went along with it despite being fully aware of the consequences that could arise from this action. However, I trusted that he was not infected and honestly believed that he loved me enough to confide in me if he was infected. I later found out that he lied to me and had intentionally infected me. I became very sick for several weeks and just slept all day with fevers. I could not eat since my glands were blocking my passage. I had a hard time standing up and stopped participating in daily activities. At one point I stopped breathing and was rushed to the hospital where they did a lot of tests but did not discover anything serious. Their only response was that my white blood cells were very low and that it could mean that I have leukemia, but they were not certain. I finally went to see my family doctor where he decided to perform an HIV test. I discovered of my status a day before Easter, April 20, 2004.

How I felt about my diagnosis – The day I found out my status became one of the toughest days in my life. Everything turned into anger and frustration. I could not believe what was happening and that it could not be true, how!? The doctor consoled me by telling me that he was sorry but it’s not a death sentence. I responded by saying, “you are right and that I am thankful”, but at that time I felt like I had no energy left. I knew that my thinking had to change because I needed to be strong for what was about to come my way. I needed to let my ex-boyfriend and my



family members know about my status. It was my duty to protect others, including my ex. I can still feel the pain of that Sunday when the entire family gathered to celebrate a joyous occasion and the only thing that came to my mind was how I could face them with my positive status.

Personal Reaction and Reaction from Family and Friends – The first family member I told was my oldest cousin. At first, he was very angry but then he told me that he accepts me and will support me all the way. I told my mom while we were cooking. I was crying so much that she guessed something was wrong. The rest of the family was told in a family dinner a few weeks later. I am very lucky to have a very religious and cultural family, who understand love and family values. They were thankful that I shared a private and painful discovery. I believe that a person's status should be shared with those that he/she is comfortable with. In my case, my entire family and most of my friends know about my status and have been very supportive.

Living Positively – Having a balanced life is the key to controlling you and the virus. Another tip that has worked for me is to continue to have fun and enjoy life without completely focusing on HIV/AIDS issues all the time. I also take vitamins and herbal medicine for good health. Being positive has not changed me too much and I do not think it will ever. Things that have changed are that I am much healthier in my food intake and I work out and pay attention to my body much more. I love life much more. I have a great lifestyle right now and advocate for HIV/AIDS. I have an amazing family, friends and a job that I love. I am in school part-time and majoring in Marketing and the non-profit sector, so that one day I can involve my passion and advocacy together. I am a lot more satisfied with myself now than before I was infected. Being positive has changed me into the person that I am proud of. I am currently not, and have never been, on ARVs.

Life and Aspirations – My greatest ambition is to be happy and get married with the man that I love. I believe that my being positive will not stop me from realizing this dream. If it does then I will still be happy with myself and my work. There is nothing that I wished I was doing before I tested positive that I cannot do now. I want to be remembered for my love of life, my passion for issues that face humanity and for my humor. I also believe that every person is a role model in him/herself. If I were to choose one person, my role model would be Stephen Lewis because of his commitment towards HIV/AIDS in Africa.

Facing Stigma – This past year my doctor requested that I get some blood tests done at the clinic. At the lab, I showed the nurse a clinical requisition that was signed by my doctor. She found out that I was HIV+ and refused to draw my blood. I decided to take action against refusing services especially since she worked in the Health industry and there are regulations against this. I approached the HIV/AIDS Legal Clinic in Ontario (HALCO) and it was decided that this case would be addressed to the College Of Nurses of Ontario.

Halting the Virus – I think the way we can halt the spread of the virus is by showing the true face of HIV/AIDS and what it does to an individual not only physically and emotionally, but also socially. We need to focus our attention on youth and need to let them know that having fun is not a bad thing, but that there are ways they can protect themselves and their partners from HIV/AIDS. They should have the liberty to get a condom without being questioned and we should provide information that will educate them. Youth need to get involved and should be given proper training and opportunities needed since young people are the best peer educators for themselves. I think that the best thing stakeholders can do is provide funding for access to information, education and services that will improve and bring opportunities.

Advice for Other Young People – I think that youth should do what they think is right for them and their safety. Many young people do not tell their status for safety or stigma concerns. I really believe that you need to accept your HIV/AIDS status to live well and to be happy with yourself. My advice to other youth that are living positively and cannot disclose their status, due to depression, fear of stigmatization and so on is to seek help. There are many non-profit organizations that offer counseling and programs that connect you with other youth that are infected with the virus. It provides a ground to share your feelings and concerns while learning from each other. Another advice is to accept your status and not ignore it. Deal with your problems; do not run away from them. Accept life and its destiny.



If you have any 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 kiran@youthaidscoalition.org. Join GYCA by subscribing to GYCA's partner organization TIG at www.takingitglobal.org and then sending a blank email to: gyca-subscribe@groups.takingitglobal.org.