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The Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS (GYCA) is a youth-led, UNFPA and UNAIDS-supported international network of almost 4000 young people and adult allies working to end the spread of HIV and AIDS in over 150 countries.

1) World AIDS Day Report



We are pleased to announce that the 2007 World AIDS Day Report is now available! Over 104 GYCA members hosted events in 34 countries around the world that stressed the importance of youth leadership in the fight against HIV and AIDS. Organizers used creative venues and materials to engage

youth and their communities. Most importantly, GYCA members were able to cooperate and collaborate with other government offices, civil society organizations, health officials, religious leaders, professors and community leaders to unite the population against the spread of HIV. Download the report here:

<http://www.youthaidscoalition.org/docs/gycawadreport2007.pdf>

Highlights Include:

- Over 300 youths in Buea, Cameroon, rallied for the cause "Unite for Children, Unite Against AIDS" by walking through the streets loudly singing messages about HIV prevention.
- Students at Wilfred Laurier Brantford University in Canada educated their campus with documentary screenings, fun activities and educational materials, and also raised

\$2,000 for a volunteer trip to Botswana this summer.

- Eritrean youth conducted a music workshop for 50 students to write, sing, record and perform music and poetry about HIV and AIDS.
- 6,500 people marched through Ramayampet, India carrying more than 250 banners with messages such as "We prevent HIV – we pledge and promise!"
- "Kick HIV/AIDS Out of Liberia" World AIDS Day soccer and kickball tournaments were held between six secondary schools.
- 20,000 condoms and 60,000 educational materials distributed throughout Skopje, Macedonia.
- 100 students and teachers attended educational workshops in Kathmandu, Nepal.
- HIV/AIDS Concert for young people on the theme of "Young people as agents of positive change" presented in Cross River State, Nigeria.
- Transgender and men who have sex with men focus groups discussed better ways of HIV prevention in Okara, Pakistan.
- Free screening of an educational documentary on AIDS for 220 youths who had no access to television in Moshi, Tanzania

2) Introducing Regional Focal Points for 2008

After reviewing over 150 applications, a selection committee of GYCA Taskforce members selected 12 Regional Focal Points (RFPs). Congratulations! The new RFPs will be selecting and managing National Focal Points (NFPs), mapping youth AIDS initiatives in their regions, reporting on their countries' commitment to youth for the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) review process, reaching out to marginalized youth, participating in organizing for the Mexico Youth Force at the XVII International AIDS Conference in August 2008, and more. We are very pleased to announce our RFPs for the year 2008!

Himakshi Piplani (India – South Asia)

Himakshi, 19, is a youth activist currently pursuing her law degree from Symbiosis Law School, and

served as the 2007 GYCA National Focal Point for India. Her interest in HIV, AIDS and related issues developed in early 2005 while researching an article on sexual violence against children in the war-torn Darfur region, and while attending the International Inter-Faith Conference on HIV/AIDS, organized by National AIDS Control Organization of India. These experiences prompted her to do further research on the HIV and AIDS scenario in India and abroad. As the final project for GYCA's Political Advocacy e-course, she developed an advocacy campaign plan based on increasing young people's access to HIV related information, education and communication services.



In 2006, she led a team of youth volunteers to review her government's progress towards commitments made on HIV and AIDS and subsequently wrote the India Youth Shadow Report for the UNGASS + 5 Review as a part of GYCA's National

Research for UNGASS + 5 review process. She also attended the Youth Summit UNGASS side event as a youth representative with full funding provided by UNICEF. She has been a volunteer on the Wake Up Pune HIV Awareness Campaign (WUP) since November 2006, and in February 2007 led a team of young volunteers to establish a Pune-based youth network on HIV and AIDS called Youth Action HIV And AIDS Network (YAHAAN). YAHAAN functions as the youth program of WUP and partners with local groups such as Deep Griha Society's HIV/AIDS program, Sahara Aalhad, Heroes Project, and foundations such as AIESEC and Rotaract. She recently presented a paper at the 4th Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health held in Hyderabad. Himakshi hopes to further work towards ensuring greater access of young people to HIV and AIDS related services and towards protecting health related human rights of children and young people.

Desirae Clodfelter (United States of America – North America)

Desirae, 20, studies political science at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina and served as the GYCA 2007 National Focal Point for the

United States. She first became actively involved in AIDS activism in high school as a Global Citizen Corps leader for NetAid, where she reached over 3,000 of her peers through a year-long awareness and advocacy project on issues surrounding global poverty.

As a university student, she founded Furman Global Justice, a small scale special interest group that brings campus progressives together to develop stronger grassroots campaigns and to lobby for change on issues such as debt cancellation, trade reform and AIDS. She



has been active in HIV and AIDS advocacy through her work with GYCA, Student Global AIDS Campaign, and the South Carolina C2EA. She also worked on a project that ended the 500 person wait list under South Carolina's AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP). Dez participated in the Oxfam CHANGE Initiative, helped organize a national student lobby day for the farm bill, and serves as the Missions Student Pastor for Wesley Fellowship, the Vice President of the Environmental Group, and the News Editor for The Paladin, Furman's weekly newspaper. She has led a project that focuses on civilians injured in Iraq and, as a result of these efforts, has been chosen to join a women's peace delegation to Iran this June.

Ramy Nasr (Egypt- Middle East and North Africa)



Ramy, 23, is a medical student and served as the 2007 Regional Focal Point for the Middle East and North Africa. He began his AIDS work through a leadership program at the International Federation for Medical Students' Association and went on to work with Global Youth Partners, where he, along

with the team, succeeded in establishing a youth-adult partnership with different governmental

sectors and securing funds for their activities. Ramy founded and is currently working on establishing a campaign that aims at fighting Female Genital Mutilation in Egypt. He has already established a partnership with the National Democratic Party and has the technical support of the Arab league and Pan-Arab Project for Family Health. Ramy attended the UNGASS +5 review meetings and the Youth Summit, spoke in the UN Church event, and was interviewed on the UN radio in New York in June 2007. Ramy was a speaker in the International AIDS Conference 2006 at a leadership session titled "Learning from the Leadership of Young People and Positive Youth in the Global Response to HIV/AIDS." In that session he spoke about connecting youth around the world and his recommendations to youth, civil society and the government on this topic.

Ramy has been working with young people especially those from low income families through the Global Youth Partners program in secondary schools, where he also led peer education sessions about reproductive health and HIV related issues at the schools where they established Anti-AIDS Clubs. He has also worked in rural areas through health campaigns mainly targeting children and maternal health. As an RFP Ramy aims to use his prior contacts and knowledge to establish and strengthen both regional and national structures for the GYCA network and develop a curriculum based on the GYCA e-courses.

Stephen Kasoma (Uganda – East Africa)

Stephen, 24, works at the Straight Talk Foundation for health and development communication and served as the 2007 GYCA Regional Focal Point for East Africa. He is also an active member of other youth networks such as Advocates For Youth, Network for Adolescents and Youth of Africa (NAYA), and UNICEF Voices of Youth. He studied Information Technology from the New Jersey Institute of



Technology, and uses his skills to aid various organizations with their websites, P.R. campaigns, and other technical issues. Stephen has four years' experience in AIDS work and has worked with youth both in and out of school in urban and rural Uganda, including those directly affected by the rebel activities in the Northern region of the country.

Stephen was invited by UNAIDS and WHO as a temporary advisor on male circumcision and HIV prevention in March 2007. In addition, he participated in MTV- Staying-Alive's 48fest in July 2007 where he created short films on AIDS related issues, and won the UNICEF-Staying-Alive Vlogit Competition. As the GYCA Regional Focal Point, he coordinated a number of activities in the region and attended the Commonwealth Youth Forum in 2007. In his second term, he would like to ensure that GYCA is active in most of the Commonwealth Countries.

Eka Prahadian Abdurahman (Indonesia – Asia Pacific)

Eka, 25, currently works as the Program Manager at a Drug Recovery and Treatment Center in Aceh, Indonesia. Previously, he also established and managed a drop-in center for young people. Eka is an experienced peer educator, counselor and trainer for young people on various issues such as HIV and AIDS, drug addiction, reproductive health and co-related problems. He works with young people at a school, in the community, in the drugs user (IDU and non-IDU) population, and in the prisons.



Eka also participated with the UNAIDS Research Team in the assessment of care, support and access to treatment for People Living with HIV/AIDS in West Java, Indonesia, and as a program assistant in the Empowered Youth Aceh program, which is supported by UNICEF. In 2005, Eka worked as a Field Officer for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) helping tsunami victims and their families. In addition to his work on HIV, Eka also facilitated an Outward Bound program that uses the therapeutic elements of nature to help children with special needs.

Rodrigo Olin (Mexico – Latin America)



Rodrigo, 24, has a BS in Economics, and is the Executive Director of Ave de México, which has 20 years of experience promoting HIV prevention, human sexuality and sexual and reproductive rights among vulnerable populations, particularly the LGBT community.

Rodrigo also completed the National AIDS Program course, CENSIDA, on Sexuality and HIV/AIDS. He has been living with HIV since 2003. Through Ave de Mexico, he has worked with many groups, including the National AIDS Program in Mexico, UNFPA office for Mexico and Central America, Youth Coalition for Sexual Health, Mexican and Latin American Networks of People Living with HIV, Catholics for Free Choice, and others.

Rodrigo has experience providing workshops on HIV and AIDS, sexuality, harm reduction of sexually transmitted infections, advocacy, project designing, sexual health, sexual and reproductive rights, and the promotion of involvement of young people in HIV prevention. He has also coordinated outreach and peer education projects for men who have sex with men, gay PLHIV, and students. In 2007 he helped coordinate the Heart Connection Tour of Dance4life Mexico that will run through 2014, and is currently co-chairing the committee to plan the youth pre-conference before the International AIDS Conference in August 2008.

Nahbila



Degree in Curriculum Studies and Teaching/Economics, and is currently studying

Paquita

Tabenyang

(Cameroon – Central Africa)

Nahbila, 23, is currently the Director of the Cameroon Association for the Protection and Education of the Child (CAPEC) and served as GYCA's Cameroon National Focal Point for 2007. Nahbila is a graduate from the University of Buea, with a Bachelor of Education

International Marketing. While at university, she was an active member of the student Health Club, which focuses on HIV. Nahbila works mostly with children, youth, and PLWHA, and participates in a youth-focused approach in the fight against HIV and AIDS in Cameroon that uses a combined methodology of risks and vulnerability mapping to identify risky sexual behavior amongst adolescents. She has organized activities like youth HIV/AIDS and human rights awareness campaigns, capacity building workshops, training programs and youth exchange programs.

To address gender inequalities and the barriers that women and girls face when trying to access education and health services, Nahbila has worked as a volunteer with a number of national NGOs where she worked as a community health educator, coordinator of a youth development center, and an HIV/AIDS project coordinator. Nahbila also headed a community animators association that uses theatre and songs to educate and sensitize the rural population on development and health issues. In addition, she is a trained peer educator and has participated in trainings organized by National Committee for the Fight against AIDS, GTZ Cameroon, Public Health Ministry, US Embassy TaskForce, and she has been trained in using ICT by various organizations. Currently, Nahbila is doing a new project with CAPEC on HIV Education with Rural Youth.

Esther Eshiet (Nigeria- West Africa)

Esther, 20, is a human sexuality educator and women's and girls' rights activist and served as GYCA's Nigeria Focal Point in 2007. Currently, she is studying social work at the University of Calabar. She is a graduate of Girls Power Initiative 3-year Comprehensive Sexuality and Life Management program, and has worked as a peer health educator and volunteer for the Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria. She played lead roles in several projects such as the "Youth with Future" project, a youth mobilization program, and the "We are one" project, an HIV/AIDS integration program. She was also involved with the Global Youth Action Network/World Bank "Youth in Action" project, the



GPI's HIV/AIDS work place policy drafting committee, and a World Citizen educational program.

In 2007, she facilitated a capacity building workshop on the role of young people in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals organized by the World Youth Alliance with support from GYAN/World Bank. During her term as Nigeria NFP, Esther advocated for the creation of a youth department in the University of Calabar. She is also involved in the Creating Local Connections West Africa project as the Research and Documentation officer and National Leadership Trainer, where she mentors other young people in projects such as a group called "Future Assured," that focuses on providing accurate information on sexuality and sexual and reproductive health for teenagers in an area with a high rate of sex tourism, in order to empower teenagers negotiate and/or refuse sexual activity, as well as serve as agents of change among their peers in that community.

Nathalie Carter (United Kingdom – Western Europe)

Nathalie, 24, is pursuing a Masters of Science in Health, Community and Development at the London School of Economics. She is also studying Spanish and Indonesian and recently completed a postgraduate diploma in HIV and AIDS. Nathalie has lived and studied in the UK, Australia and the Canary Islands. She has a deep interest in international relations and development, specifically the position of minorities including women and those living with stigmatized conditions such as HIV. Nathalie is interested in structures and how influential forces such as government and politics have an impact at the community level. She currently works as a fundraiser and project coordinator for two community based HIV organizations, Positive Parenting and Children and The London Ecumenical AIDS Trust.



Nathalie coordinates support groups for women, children and adolescents living with HIV. These groups focus on peer support, personal development and advocacy. She recently managed the creation of a DVD and website aimed at reaching youth who do not access an in-person support group. Nathalie provides training programs for an LGBT youth organization including workshops on sexual health. In addition to her health work Nathalie is involved with several youth organizations. She has coordinated a range of international youth committees including education against discrimination at the THIMUN Youth Assembly in The Hague, Netherlands, was a youth delegate at the XVI AIDS conference in Toronto and facilitates youth conferences for the Catalonia Model United Nations in Barcelona.

Natasha Grovesnor (Guyana – Caribbean)

Natasha, 26, is the coordinator of a youth HIV and AIDS program at the Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre, called the Commonwealth Youth for Positive Living. This program equips and inspires young people to undergo behavior change through self-development training and elements of positive living. The training is implemented in schools and at the community level. Natasha started work in the AIDS field four years ago when the Commonwealth Youth for Positive Change was in its pilot stages.



The program was established in order to build a bridge between youth infected with and affected by the virus as youth advocates for marginalized youth and those excluded from mainstream resources. Today, the program provides capacity building to youth from varying backgrounds all over the Caribbean and focuses heavily on self-development, behaviour change and positive living to fight the pandemic. Natasha also helped to host a two-month radio program, called "Living Healthy with HIV/AIDS," as well as another radio program

called "Healthy Lifestyles," and has represented Guyana at various regional youth conferences. Natasha is motivated daily by a quotation by Helen Keller, "I am only one; but I am still one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. I will not refuse to do the something I can do!"

Tawanda Chisango (Zimbabwe – Southern Africa)



Tawanda, 27, served as the GYCA 2007 National Focal Point for Zimbabwe, and is the Program Coordinator for Patsime Trust where he supervises the development, maintenance and

expansion of Patsime's projects on HIV and AIDS, gender and youth. One of the projects "Buddyz for Luv" is a youth multi-media initiative that addresses issues such as HIV and AIDS, gender and life skills. He is also involved with Patsime's television serial drama, Suburb D that targets Zimbabwean youth and focuses on HIV and AIDS, gender, intergenerational communication and human trafficking. Moreover, Tawanda works to train youth to use theatre to address important development issues in their communities. In addition to his work with Patsime, Tawanda has worked as a consultant to NGOs and as the Media Officer for the Southern Africa HIV and AIDS Information Dissemination Service (SAfAIDS). For SAfAIDS he developed and updated the Media Kiosk e-platform. Tawanda is interested in citizen media tools and co-moderates Act Alive which is one of the biggest e-forums on arts and development in the world.

Tawanda has also taught courses such as "Theories of Development and Democracy," and "Principles and Practices of Social Marketing," and was a Staff Development Fellow in the Faculty of Social Sciences' Department of Media and Society Studies at Midlands State University in Zimbabwe. He is also a key correspondent for the Health Development Networks, which is a global discussion forum on issues related to HIV/AIDS and TB.

Ekaterina Pandeli (Ukraine – Eastern and Central Europe)



Ekaterina, 23, is a social worker providing medical, social, and psychological support for HIV/AIDS infected children in orphanages. She was the manager of a national medical practicum for doctors about the vertical transmission of HIV/AIDS infection from mother to child. This project included the special training of medical personnel of the orphanages. She also provides health trainings for street children between 6 and 17 years old. In a similar vein, Ekaterina is a trainer in informational and educational projects for prevention of HIV among youth sex workers studying in boarding schools. At the Center for HIV/AIDS infected children, she consults with parents on ART related questions and psychological issues.

Ekatarina is particularly excited about fighting stigma around people with HIV in Ukraine, in the medical system, within families and in society at large. Aside from her social work with children, Ekaterina has also dedicated her life to music and art. As a student she held free concerts for orphan children, old people, hospitals and military personnel. She looks forward to the chance to work with people and organizations throughout her region to stop the spread of HIV among young people.

3) GYCA Worldwide

Nigeria NFP Raises Awareness on Sexual Abuse, and Sexual and Reproductive Health

Esther Eshiet, then NFP for Nigeria (and now West Africa RFP), participated in a public education forum in Calabar in November titled "Building Partnerships for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse," organized by the Network to Curb Sexual Abuse. Esther discussed "Sexuality Education: A tool for advocating against sexual abuse and the spread of HIV/AIDS," and a representative from Ministry of Justice, Mr. Uba, presented on "Cases of sexual abuse reported in the Ministry of Justice."

In December, Esther took part in the 2nd National Youth Leadership Training Summit on “Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights; Challenges and Opportunities,” organized by the Centre for Sustainable Development and Education in Africa (CSDEA). Over the course of four days, 40 youth leaders attended presentations and working groups on the following five topics: adolescent sexuality, HIV/AIDS and the youth, early marriage, abortion & its legal provisions, and female genital mutilation/cutting. Esther assisted in identifying opportunities for advocacy and empowering the youth to take action in educating their peers to help reduce stigma on HIV. She also utilized the time with the youth to recruit for GYCA.



Esther and other presenters at the event.

Rwanda RFP Attends International Labour Organization Young Worker Consultation

Jean Claude Dusingize, GYCA's former Central Africa, RFP recently participated in the International Labour Consultation on Youth Workers and HIV/AIDS, titled “A generation free of HIV/AIDS – what the world of work can do.” The interactive meeting focused on sharing experiences to strengthen partnerships for national responses to AIDS, and in particular to address the problems of poverty, youth unemployment and HIV/AIDS amongst young people. The long-term goals were to promote the increased integration of HIV-related issues in youth employment programmes, to ensure that supporting youth livelihoods is an integral part of HIV responses, and to contribute to the development of integrated strategies for youth in national AIDS plans.

Young participants and other stakeholders had many opportunities to share experiences, develop

ideas and collaborate to generate the adopted recommendations; the final outcome of the three day consultation. Key issues that emerged from the discussion included institutional roles, poverty and unemployment as related to HIV/AIDS, decent employment, sex work challenges, and UNAIDS and resource issues.

Rwanda, like many developing countries, has a young population and high unemployment rates, with over 60 per cent of the population under 25 years of age. Young people not only have less access to work, but they also have less access to decent and productive work. In Rwanda over 80 per cent of the population manage on less than US\$2 a day. When income must be obtained at any cost, young people (who may also be orphans or come from HIV affected families) find work that is marginal, dangerous or illegal, making them more vulnerable to poverty, child labour, social exclusion, drug abuse, violence and HIV.

At the consultation, Jean Claude reported that, “Vulnerable youth can be reintegrated in socio-economic activities by strengthening capacities and empowering them to create employment and become job providers rather than job seekers through innovative, sustainable income generating projects. Successful projects have clear plans and strategies as well as concise assessment, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to determine impacts and adjust plans accordingly.”

4) Living Positively:

Ricardo Gutierrez, Mexico, age 27

How did you become infected with HIV? I contracted the virus after having unprotected sex. It is in those confusing times, wanting to be loved (even though that is not a reason, nor an excuse), that it happened. I received my HIV diagnosis in December of 2004.

When and how did you know about your status? I get a lot of throat illnesses, and one day, when I couldn't get rid of an infection, I went to get a throat test- and since they were promoting the ELISA tests, [one type of HIV test] I decided to take one. When I was there, they sent my results

to the central office of the laboratory, where a doctor gave them to me. The next day they took a sample for the Western Blot [another type of HIV test.]

How did you feel when you got to know? Really bad at the beginning. Fortunately I didn't become too depressed because I knew that nowadays there are many advances in medicine to increase the quality of life for us. But I began to look for assistance right away.

What did your family say or think about you? My family does not know about it. My mother suffers from depression, which is why I do not think that it is the right time to tell her.

You have been living positively for years; can you share tips of how you've done this successfully? First of all, attitude, the desire to be well, going to my doctor's appointments to run my Viral Load and CD4 tests. I don't smoke or drink alcohol, and that has helped me a lot (I have never drank or smoked), and the great medical care that I receive where I am being treated.

How has being positive affected what you do now? At the moment I am not working. At the Coca Cola company, I was discriminated against for being positive. They gave me an HIV test without my permission, and since I obviously came out positive, they denied me the opportunity to work. I felt really disappointed that they could not inform themselves about the illness and not discriminate. Unfortunately in Mexico, it is hard to prove discrimination to the authorities, on top of being a complicated and arduous process. This makes me sad, because they just put a label on you without getting to learn more about the illness and getting to understand that your professional skills are worth more than whether or not you have HIV. On another note, I take better care of myself, changed my eating habits and watch out for my health, etc.

What is your greatest ambition (dream) in life? Continue working, developing my skills and to not have HIV be an impediment. Having great health and maintaining a good level of life.

Do you think that being HIV positive may stop you from realizing this dream, or has it stopped you? Not completely, but I know that it will affect my professional development, especially here in

Mexico. But I am confident that little by little those myths and taboos about the infection will go away.

What do you think that can be done to halt the spread of the HIV virus? Inform others; generating true informative campaigns about prevention and the consequences of not taking care of yourself. At the same time, for those who are already infected, create a healthy culture of going to the doctor, and following their instructions to the "t".

Do you think people that are positive should disclose their status? Not necessarily. If you are asymptomatic and your health is relatively good, I don't think that it's necessary. Especially when the reaction that it can cause with other people is that you become stigmatized.

What advice do you have for young people that are living positively and cannot disclose their status, due to depression, fear of stigmatization and so on? First of all, know that they are not alone, that the infection is something that nowadays can be controlled, that they should seek help, and that a lot of whether or not the treatment works properly depends on oneself. If they have suffered from discrimination in their country and if this is highly punishable, they shouldn't think twice about reporting it to the authorities.

What do you want to be remembered for? For my professional achievements, my assistance to this cause, and my support for the Mexican foundation, Vivo (www.mexicovivo.org).

Who are your role models? I think of Dr. Reyes Terán, chief of CIENI, a center of investigation here in Mexico that focuses on HIV, for his human and professional qualities, and for the excellent service provided in the CIENI. In general, all people who see people for who they are, without labels, like Mother Theresa in Calcutta did.

Anything else you want to share?: Thank you for this space to air our own life experiences.



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 aleza@youthaidscoalition.org. Anyone can join GYCA at <http://www.youthaidscoalition.org/join.html>