

"working internationally for sexual and reproductive rights"

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## YOUTH COALITION

# THE WATCHDOG



### Caribbean Youth Activists Unite!

Claudia Ahumada, Chile

Volume I, Issue III, August 2006

On July 10th to 14th, 2006, in Trinidad and Tobago, 16 Caribbean youth activists, between the ages of 19 and 28 years old, came together. They were from countries all around the region, specifically: Jamaica, Belize, Dominican Republic, St Vincent and the Grenadines, St Lucia, Guyana, Suriname, Dominica, and Montserrat.

The purpose of their meeting was an advocacy training on sexual and reproductive rights, organized and facilitated by the Youth Coalition. The training was fully organized, planned and facilitated by youth, and addressed a number of issues. Specifically, the five-day training included sessions about the history of sexual and reproductive rights, youth perspective in the field of SRR, human rights perspective, gender perspective, United Nations texts and analysis. In addition, the training aimed to build the participants skills on advocacy, communication and dealing with the media. For this purpose, the training also included sessions on advocacy, communications basics, a brief media training, and tools for creating an advocacy campaign.

The YC Caribbean Training provided youth activists from around the region with the unique opportunity to come together to discuss their common goals in regards to youth sexual and reproductive rights. Loaded with motivation, participants concluded the training by emphasizing their plans to continue strategizing and working together.

As expressed by one of the participants, Kevin Francis, 19, Jamaica:

"The Youth advocacy training has not only enlightened me on issues of advocacy and sexual and reproductive health and rights. It has opened doors to the wider Caribbean and world resources that other youths are not exposed to. The sessions were great and had great participations from everyone. Presenters were knowledgeable and the material informative. I am prepared to start advocating on behalf of youth across the Caribbean and world."

**Lets hear it for the Caribbean youth activists!!!!**

### YC SPOTLIGHT

- Watch for YC Members at the XVI International AIDS Conference taking place August 13 - 18 in Toronto, Canada
- Check out our newest publication *Making the Linkages: HIV/AIDS and Sexual and Reproductive Rights*, on our website [www.youthcoalition.org](http://www.youthcoalition.org)



The Youth Coalition held a Caribbean Regional Advocacy Training in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago July 10 - 14.

### YC at the UNGASS Review on HIV/AIDS - Team Spirit and Some Very Good Results

Victor Bernhardt, Sweden

In the shift from May to June a large delegation from the Youth Coalition took part in the five-year review of the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS by the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS). In the UN, five and ten year reviews are standard practice after a larger summit, conference or General Assembly Special Session. This year, a lot was at stake because of the tensions that exist within the UN at this point. The whole of the UN is undergoing a substantial reform process, and at the same time conservative anti-sexual and reproductive rights politics are strongly pushed by conservative Member States.

A record number of representatives from civil society and activist communities had been invited to the HIV/AIDS UNGASS in May and June. The Youth Coalition teamed up with a group of other youth organizations and formed what we called the Progressive Youth Caucus. Together we worked tirelessly lobbying in the corridors of the UN, working to get a strong youth perspective in the declaration that was to be put out at the end of the UNGASS.

The process with the declaration at the UNGASS was unusually disorganized and confusing, even for ambassadors and other veteran negotiators. However, at the end of the day our efforts proved successful, and in the final declaration we saw the strongest language on youth and HIV prevention that has ever been written in a similar declaration. Many of the youth in the Progressive Youth Caucus were, or managed to get, on Government delegations, which was very

helpful in getting good language in the declaration. Other large parts of the declaration were a big disappointment for all who hoped that we were going to move forward. Many of



YC Members working hard during the UNGASS meeting

the activists showed their anger with the low ambitions of the Member States with a protest in the General Assembly itself, during an evening session dedicated to remembrance. The protestors were stripped of their passes, but then given back after a personal command from Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

In short, the YC and our allies were successful in terms of advocacy for young peoples sexual and reproductive rights, but generally the HIV/AIDS UNGASS was something that left many with mixed and often angry feelings. Luckily, there will be many more opportunities for us to get back and make things even better!

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Questions or comments? Email us at [outreach@youthcoalition.org](mailto:outreach@youthcoalition.org)