The Youth Community of Practice (YCoP) global listserv links professionals and practitioners at USAID and its partner organizations to effective youth development ideas, information and best practices to help:

*Design more effective, sustainable youth programs, and
*Better integrate youth participation in USAID development projects

In this *Links* Health Series Part One: Promoting Safe Sexual and Reproductive Health

In the early teenage years, puberty turns children into youth, who begin to yearn for the girl or boy next door, and find themselves at increased risk for sexually-transmitted diseases, pregnancy, and a host of other concerns. With the advent of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, organizations around the world are quickly realizing the importance of properly educating this particularly vulnerable population. This *Links* highlights successful programs for educating youth about sexual and reproductive health, and provides resources for organizations that want to improve their existing programs.

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**Announcements:**

**Global Youth Service Day, April 24-26**
http://www.gysd.org/
Organized by Youth Service America with the Global Youth Action Network, Global Youth Service Day (GYSD) is an annual global event that highlights and celebrates the ongoing contributions of youth to their communities through volunteer service and service-learning. GYSD is the largest service event in the world. Over the past 20 years, it has brought together more than 40 million people in thousands of communities worldwide. Millions of youth will participate in this year’s 20th annual GYSD on April 24-26, 2009.

**African Youth Initiative and Creativity Award 2009**
Launched on African Youth Day in 2007, the African Youth Initiative and Creativity Award 2009 marks the second issuance of the award, which aims to encourage African youth action and leadership. The theme of this year’s competition is “African Youth Promote Positive African Values.” The 2009 award seeks to reward young Africans for their ability to create persuasive speeches to facilitate the ratification of the African Youth Charter, accelerate implementation of existing youth-related policies, and promote the creation of new laws, policies, and frameworks to advance the development of youth in their respective countries.

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**Projects and Initiatives:**

**Saturday Learner’s Program at Ikhwezi Lokusa Wellness Centre, South Africa**
http://www.ikhweziwellnesscentre.co.za/index.htm (General organization web site)
http://www.ikhweziwellnesscentre.co.za/programmes.html (Saturday Learner’s Program)
Ikhwezi Lokusa Wellness Centre in East London, South Africa, began their Saturday Learner’s Program in 2004. The program buses high school students to the Centre every Saturday to receive training in sexual and reproductive health. Using interactive training methods such as
role plays and “energizers,” the training covers topics like HIV/AIDS transmission and prevention, sexually transmitted infections (STI’s), rape, peer pressure, teen pregnancy, drugs and alcohol, sexual abuse, homosexuality and self-esteem. The Centre encourages the Saturday Learners to return home and share their messages with their friends and families. In addition to the Saturday Learner’s Program and other outreach programs, the Ikhwezi Lokusa Wellness Centre provides medical treatment and care, patient empowerment and support, and education and skills training.

**Elige Red de Jóvenes por los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos**
http://www.elige.net/home.html (Spanish only)
Elige Red de Jóvenes por los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos, or Choose Youth Network for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, aims to empower Mexican youth to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights. Formed by a group of young women in 1996, Elige focuses on gender issues (especially issues related to support of the feminist movement), age discrimination against youth, youth empowerment, human rights with regard to sexual and reproductive health, and citizenship. For example, the organization offers young Mexican women support in learning how to manage and plan pregnancy. It also works to create linkages between youth groups, youth-led civil society organizations, and youth activists across Mexico. The web site contains a section called “You Choose,” where youth can learn about their sexual and reproductive rights, follow links to manuals regarding sexual and reproductive health and other reading material, and learn about ways to participate (e.g., advocacy campaigns, HIV-awareness-raising initiatives).

**Straight Talk Foundation and Young Empowered and Healthy (YEAH), Uganda**
http://www.straight-talk.or.ug/
http://www.yeahuganda.org/index.php
Straight Talk Foundation (STF) and Young, Empowered, and Healthy (YEAH) are two organizations in Uganda that combine mass media with other outreach programs to promote healthy sexual and reproductive health messages to adolescents and people who work with adolescents. *Straight Talk*, a monthly newspaper targeting 15-24 year olds that promotes safe sex messages and life skills information, is STF’s founding publication, but the organization has expanded to publish *Parent Talk* (a newspaper for parents), produce radio shows, and conduct a number of other outreach programs. In 2004, STF and the Communication for Development Foundation Uganda (CDFU) partnered to form YEAH, which is “a multi-channel communication initiative in Uganda by and for young people aged 15-24” that aims “to stimulate dialogue and action among communities, families, schools, and health institutions.” In addition to producing several mass media materials, such as comic books, videos, and board games, YEAH conducts two major campaigns: the “Something for Something” Love Campaign and the Be a Man Campaign. The “Something for Something” Love Campaign focuses on transactional sex, while Be a Man focuses on redefining masculinities “to protect their own health, influence health-seeking behaviors and improve male/female relationships.”

**Youth Coalition**
The Youth Coalition is a youth-led international organization “committed to promoting adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive rights at the national, regional and international levels.” The Youth Coalition’s activities include advocating for youth rights, particularly those pertaining to sexual and reproductive health, and capacity building for youth working on sexual health issues. The Coalition conducts a number of trainings around the world. For example, the organization is currently calling for applications to participate in a June 2009 training on the International Conference on Population and Development key documents and processes in the Middle East and North Africa region. The Youth Coalition also sends delegates to relevant global conferences and intergovernmental meetings. Finally, the Coalition has an excellent resources page that provides links to Youth Coalition-published documents (e.g., fact
sheets, guidebooks), as well other publications related to youth and sexual and reproductive health issues.

**Resources for Practitioners:**

**Family Care International Youth Health and Rights Resources Page**

Family Care International (FCI) has published a number of resources related to youth and health, particularly sexual and reproductive health. FCI has created flipcharts, briefing cards, and briefing kits in multiple languages that can be used to educate youth about HIV/AIDS and advocate for youth rights. Published in English, French, and Spanish, *You, Your Life, Your Dreams* is a book for adolescents that helps them make informed decisions concerning their sexual and reproductive health. A new publication, *Mobilising Communities on Young People’s Health and Rights: An Advocacy Toolkit for Programme Managers*, is a comprehensive manual on how to develop and implement an advocacy campaign for youth sexual health programming. It contains chapters on conducting situational analysis, working with partners, preparing messages, and monitoring and evaluating. The toolkit also comes with a training guide that can be used to bolster the knowledge and skills of community groups and networks.

**Youth InfoNet 53: Resources on Youth Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS**

The Interagency Youth Working Group’s 53rd edition of *Youth InfoNet* offers a broad list of program resources and research summaries/articles related to youth reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. The resources offered cover topics such as gender-based violence in schools, contraceptive use, migrating children, and HIV. One link, for example, leads to an advocacy guide for helping children living with HIV. The research summaries lead to articles and studies about issues such as sexual behavior, sexual abuse, male circumcision, and peer education. All of the resources were published in 2008 or 2009.

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**Looking for YOUR input:** We would like to hear from you! YCoP welcomes ideas, resources, and best practices on effective youth programs and youth participation. We would also like to encourage nominations of other youth practitioners or youth leaders to participate in the YCoP Links listserv. Hit “reply” to send information and feedback to YCoP Links.

To unsubscribe from the list, users should send an e-mail to listserv@info.usaid.gov with only “unsubscribe youthcop” in the body of the e-mail. (No signatures please).

**Mission of YCoP:** The Youth Community of Practice provides a forum for professionals and practitioners at USAID and its partner organizations to gather, consolidate, archive, disseminate and exchange information, knowledge, ideas and best practices, particularly related to the incorporation of youth participation in USAID development projects. The Youth Community of Practice is an informal body of volunteer members, reached through a global list serve and Washington-based chapter. Both the list serve and DC chapter forums include USAID staff, youth practitioners outside of the Agency, and youth themselves. It is jointly sponsored by the office of education in the bureau of Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade (EGAT) at USAID and the Education Quality Improvement Program3 (EQUIP3), and implemented by the Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC).

**Disclaimer:** The information and opinions expressed in the materials provided through YCoP Links or posted by listserv participants is not official U.S. Government information and does not necessarily represent the views or positions of the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. Government or EQUIP3. For a copy of the guidelines and/or charter, put the request in the subject line of the email and send to youthcop@lists.info.usaid.gov. Participants should be aware that the list is public and not private communication. When participants voluntarily disclose personal information on a list serve, that information can be collected and used by others and may result in unsolicited messages from other people.