Youth Coalition
Annual Report 2005
Acknowledgements

We must thank all of the Youth Coalition’s members and staff for their hard work throughout 2005. This year presented many challenges and changes, and brought many wonderful opportunities as well. Thank you to all of our funders for once again allowing us to achieve our goals, we rely on your generous financial support to continue to involve youth in exercising their rights.

Secretariat Staff 2005

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Pamela Pizarro - Communications and Outreach Officer
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September 2004 – September 2005

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Introduction

2005 was another great year of achievements for the Youth Coalition. Aside from attending numerous conferences and meetings, the Youth Coalition was able to organize a 60 person International Youth Forum in Buenos Aires, Argentina in May. This forum entitled “The Sexual Evolution of Development” was the largest event to date solely organized by the Youth Coalition. In addition YC members continued to advocate for the inclusion of youth within decision-making processes at events such as the 49th Session on the Status of Women, the Civil Society Hearings, and the 2005 World Summit among others.

The year also marked a growth in membership as well as individuals were accepted from all around the globe. Twelve new individuals were accepted throughout the year, bringing the number of members to twenty-nine at the end of 2005. As new members entered the organization, some of the Youth Coalition’s founding members began to age out. This changing dynamic in the composition of the membership made for an exciting year of change for the Youth Coalition as the organization again grew and solidified itself, and continued to influence decision makers.

Activities in this report have been divided along the 4 pillars of the Youth Coalition’s Strategic Planning: I. International meetings and networking; II. External training; III. Information sharing, knowledge generation and awareness raising; IV. Membership/Internal Training. In many cases we were able to cover two areas of our strategic plan with one event such with pre-meeting workshops at several events. Therefore some events have been listed twice. In every event in which the Youth Coalition participates, the organization tries to ensure that it is in keeping with our strategic plan.

The ability for youth to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights is an important fight in today’s political climate. Too often youth are marginalized and their voices unheard due to fundamentalism, prejudices, and ignorance amongst others. By sending Youth Coalition members to international meetings and conference along with training future youth leaders, the YC is ensuring that the fight for youth SRR is not in vain. Decision and policy makers are becoming increasingly open to the youth perspective and gradually have asked for youth to advise on national policies and practices. We thank all of you whom supported our work through out the last year and hope that you will be inspired by our work in the future.
I. International meetings and networking

The Youth Coalition works to ensure that the sexual and reproductive rights of youth and adolescents are respected. We believe that sexual and reproductive rights are basic human rights and therefore apply equally to adults, youth and adolescents. By attending international meetings and networking the YC is able to ensure full youth participation in the decision making process. In order for policy makers to be influenced and support youth friendly initiatives, we must attend meetings and visibly express our message. Meetings and conferences are also great opportunities for meeting other young people who work in the same field and with whom we can work with and create lasting alliances.

Consultative Meeting on the 10-year Review of the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) - Coimbra, Portugal, January 1st to Feb 4th, 2005

This meeting attended by Claudia Ahumada (Chile), was meant to be a consultation with twenty youth organizations on the fifteen priority areas for youth that are identified in the WPAY and its follow up. The fifteen priority areas were divided into three clusters for discussion: I. Youth in the Global Economy: Poverty, Education, and Employment; II. Youth in Civil Society: Environment, Leisure, and Participation and Intergenerational relations and information and Communication Technologies (ICTs); III. Youth at Risk: Health, Drugs, Delinquency, and Discrimination of Girls and Young Women.

During this meeting the importance of ensuring that youth are familiar with UN documents and processes, such as Cairo (ICPD), Beijing, or the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in order to participate effectively became clear. In the discussion clusters, Claudia made several recommendations on language to include in the final outcome documents specifically on youth rights and SRR. Unfortunately due to the presence of an anti-choice youth who was a rapporteur for her group, much of her language was left out on the second day of the meeting. Once realizing this problem, Claudia again asked that this language, which the other youth in attendance supported, be included in the final document. Our member was successful in getting this language into the final report of the meeting.

One of the recommendations that came out of our attendance to this meeting was for the Youth Coalition to lobby for the increased inclusion of progressive youth in future events. Because of the hostile environment created by the anti-choice youth, it was difficult to include the strong language that was supported not only by Claudia, but also by other youth at the meeting. The choice of whom was selected as rapporteur was also not a decision left to the attendees, but was a choice made by the organizers. In the end the YC felt that it achieved the goal of including progressive language in the report.

49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) - New York, New York USA, Feb 28th – March 11th, 2005

During 2004, ten-year regional reviews of the Beijing Platform for Action took place. Whenever possible the Youth Coalition sent members to many of these regional review meetings to ensure that regional commitments to Beijing were upheld. In February of 2005, the ten-year international review took place in New York. This two-week event aimed to review the Beijing Platform and the results of each regional review meeting. The Youth Coalition sent a delegation of six (five members and one staff) to the meeting. Members Tanya Baker (Canada), Femi Aina Fasinu (Nigeria), Agniva Lahiri (India), Maiden Manzanal (Philippines), Cristian Nita (Romania), and staff member Pamela Pizarro (Canada), all participated in various side events and lobbied different government delegations to support the reaffirmation of the Beijing declaration.

In addition, the Youth Coalition funded and worked with youth from other regional networks to set up a Youth for Young Women’s Right Caucus, and a side event entitled “Celebrating Youth Advocacy for Sexual and Reproductive Rights”. For more information on these two events please see the section on External Training.

The delegation produced three editions of the Watchdog with the help of the Youth for Women’s Rights (Y4WR) Caucus that were distributed during the CSW. As well all caucus members were given red t-shirts with the message “Our Bodies, Our Rights” in English, Spanish, and French to highlight the cause, and to make a visual presence known during the event. The delegation along with members of the
Y4WR Caucus was successful in creating a strong youth declaration and in persuading governments in reaffirming the Beijing Platform. Many government representatives congratulated the delegates on their work during the event. In addition several members of the delegation participated in several side events. Femi was a guest speaker at an event entitled “Youth Impacting Cultural Change”, hosted by the NGO Youth Committee, which also invited Tanya as a key speaker at their event on Young People and the MDGs. Watch, a Japanese Women’s NGO invited Agniva to present his paper at an event entitled Violence Against Women and the Role of Men, while Maiden was part of an Intergenerational Dialogue.

High-Level Meeting on UNGASS - New York, New York USA, June 2nd, 2005

YC member’s attendance to the High-Level Meeting on UNGASS, was not merely an opportunity to participate and observe the meeting, but in various meetings before and after the actual event. Youth Coalition members Agniva Lahiri (India) and Tanya Baker (Canada) attended a civil society meeting with HIV/AIDS organizations on June 1st in order to strategize for the high-level meeting the next day. As well Tanya was invited by Joya Banerjee, from UNFPA and the Global Youth Coalition Against HIV/AIDS (GYCA), to present an advocacy overview and to strategize with other progressive youth attending the meeting the following day. The actual High-Level Meeting was quite restricted to civil society as most of the meeting’s Roundtable discussions were closed, but YC members were able to attend the Roundtable discussion on Prevention where they encouraged progressive comments on SRHR and young people.

Tanya and Agniva also produced an issue of the Watchdog newsletter, which they distributed at the review. They based the newsletter on the outcomes of the HIV/AIDS working group from the International Youth Forum that was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Attending the High-Level meeting was quite useful as it gave the Youth Coalition and idea of what to expect for the actual UNGASS to be held in May of 2006. It was a great opportunity to meet and work with other like-minded organizations and to begin a strategy and advocacy campaign for future events. On June 3rd, YC members were also able to attend a meeting with UNFPA to discuss what other NGOs are working on in regards to the MDGs. Tanya and Agniva also attended a NGO meeting to strategize for the 2006 UNGASS event. All of these meetings were a great opportunity for the Youth Coalition to work with other groups of youth that we had not worked with in the past, and to clarify for others the connection between SRR and HIV/AIDS.


The Youth Coalition made the decision to attend the Civil Society Hearings to ensure that specific attention was paid to youth sexual and reproductive rights. The hearings were the only formal opportunity for civil society organizations to input into the MDG review process and to advocate for the need to include young people and SRR in the MDG framework and clarify the link between SRR and development. The Youth Coalition sent members: Femi Fasinu (Nigeria), Gabriela Cano (Mexico), and Tanya Baker (Canada / Trinidad and Tobago). Patricia LaRue, the YC’s Executive Coordinator also attended the Civil Society Hearings in order to assist with the launch of the YC’s MDG publication.

One day prior to the beginning of the Civil Society Hearings, the YC delegation attended a strategy session on reproductive health advocacy along with many other NGOs working in the SRR field. This meeting helped the Youth Coalition to determine how to best advocate for youth rights during the meeting. Gabriela Cano was selected as a participate of the “Freedom to Live with Dignity” meeting, while Femi Fasinu attended the cluster of “Freedom of Want”. Gabriela prepared a written commentary highlighting the need for young people, especially young women, to have the freedom to make their own choices in regards to their sexuality and reproduction and why this is essential in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Her commentary was used by the “Freedom to Live with Dignity” group rapporteur in the final working group report.

Both of these clusters started with very positive language, with various mentions of SRR and SRH and of the importance of youth rights and youth participation. Participants also highlighted the need for further involvement of civil society in the rest of the 2005 Millennium Development Summit process.
On the second day of the hearings, the Youth Coalition held a breakfast event to launch the “Learning to Speak MDGs” publication. This launch was quite successful as the event was well attended by a diverse audience of both youth and non-youth advocates and the YC was able to distribute the publication to decision makers and NGO representatives. As well the YC delegation also worked on a factsheet summarizing the booklet to provide quick recommendations on youth and the MDGs to official delegates. The Youth Coalition also developed and distributed a special issue of the Watchdog newsletter to discuss the obstacles that youth face when attending high-level meetings, and how important it is to fully involve youth in such meetings to allow the process to be as transparent and inclusive as possible. Following the civil society hearings, the Youth Coalition delegation together with Lentswe La Rona colleagues attended a 2-day deliberation of the High Level Meeting on financing for development at the UN. There were almost no youth present and government officials were far from being aware of the issues young people face. The YC delegation developed and distributed a factsheet on budgetary allocations for young people, as an advocacy tool during the meetings and side events.

The last meeting attended was the High-level ECOSOC segment. The Youth Coalition delegation joined the few NGO presents to advocate for SRR. Inserting language on youth has been the biggest challenge for the YC delegation. They have lobbied government officials but were not able to insert anything else other than a short mention on youth unemployment. YC delegation and their colleagues were still able to push good language on SRHR, especially language on services. ECOSOC was a good experience to relate our issues on a broader scale and have a better sense of what the 2005 World Summit and Open UN meeting would be like in September.

World Youth Assembly 2005 “Young People Making a Difference” - New York, New York USA August 3rd – 5th, 2005

The 2005 World Youth Assembly was a special conference convened to address and celebrate the youth movement in taking action to make the Millennium Development Goals a reality on an international scope. Held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, it brought together participants from all over the world, although due to the difficulties in securing funding and visas many participants were not able to attend. Gemma Hobcraft (England) attended the assembly on behalf of both the United Nations Foundation and the YC. The focus of the meeting was on the MDGs, although it was clear that there was a huge variance in understanding of the MDGs amongst the participants. The Assembly was most helpful to those who were being introduced to the issues for the first time. There were long plenaries and the level of youth participation on the plenary panels was low. The variety of topics covered was impressive, including science, health and participation. The Youth Coalition conducted a well-attended workshop which used the Youth Forum publication “Learning to Speak MDGS” to encourage the participants to think about creating advocacy messages around sexual and reproductive rights when they returned to their home countries. The workshop was very interactive participant driven.

2005 World Summit and Open UN Meeting - New York, New York USA September 14th – 16th, 2005

Although the 2005 World Summit was closed to civil society the Youth Coalition decided to attend the event in order to present our recommendations on a number of MDGs that came from the International Youth Forum. We expected to create links with other NGOs and add our issues to their agendas so that we can all work towards improving the MDGs framework in such a way that it advances the human rights of all, including young people’s sexual and reproductive rights.

Prior to the Summit, the YC was invited by a French NGO, Bridge Initiative, to join the organizing team of an event called the “Open UN” which brought together over 400 people from civil society, as well as governmental delegations. The Youth Coalition was asked to help organize youth participation at the meeting, and YC member Claudia Ahumada (Chile) joined the organizing team and took part in all preparatory meetings.

The Open UN meeting was held on September 13th in New York City. A broad spectrum of civil society players, such as the women’s groups, worker’s groups, HIV/AIDS groups, and peace groups, organized the event. YC delegates played a very active role during the meeting with YC members Mirlande Demers (Haiti/Canada) and Maiden Manzanal (the Philippines) presenting the results of two of the workshops to
the plenary. The Open UN meeting provided the opportunity for YC members to directly talk to government delegates and lobby them to support our issues during the Summit.

Since the UN was closed to civil society representatives for the World Summit, the YC delegation was not able to participate and lobby as we normally do. Instead the delegation produced and distributed advocacy materials and attended side events. Claudia Ahumada (Chile) participated in a panel organized by UNFPA, CHOICE, and the Dutch Mission, on youth and the MDGs. She presented a statement entitled “every 14 seconds” which talked about achieving MDG goal 6 and combating HIV/AIDS. The delegation also produced three editions of the Watchdog recapping the days’ event and detailing their hope for the conclusion of the meeting. These Watchdogs were distributed to NGO representatives and government delegations. The delegation also distributed copies of the MDG booklet produced as an outcome of the Youth Forum and received congratulations from UN agencies, government delegates and NGO representative on its content.

10th International Women and Health Meeting (IWHM) – Delhi, India September 21st – 25th, 2005

Youth Coalition members Tanya Baker (Canada/Trinidad and Tobago), Maria Eugenia Miranda (Argentina) and Gabriela Cano (Mexico) along with staff member Pamela Pizarro (Communications Officer) were all invited to attend the 10th International Women and Health Meeting (IWHM) that was held in Delhi, India. This meeting was a wonderful opportunity to meet women and men working not only in the sexual and reproductive health and rights field, but in the field of health in general. This meeting was an opportunity for the delegation to present the Youth Coalition’s position that the integration of the youth perspective in health policies and services is vital in ensuring that youth and adolescents have access to friendly and adequate services.

Youth Forum and 14th International Conference on HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections in Africa (ICASA) - Abuja, Nigeria December 2nd – 9th, 2005

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) organized a one-day Youth Forum prior to the ICASA meeting. This forum gave the Youth Coalition’s delegation an opportunity to meet other youth that had travelled to Abuja to be present at the meeting. YC members Mirlande Demers (Haiti/Canada), Femi Fasinu (Nigeria), and Ene Christabel Unobe (Nigeria) were able to join with other progressive youth in creating an advocating strategy for the continuation of the ICASA Meeting.

The 14th International Conference on HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections in Africa (ICASA) was a chance for the Youth Coalition to better integrate its work on youth sexual and reproductive rights into the international HIV/AIDS agenda. Because of the devastating effect that the disease has had on the continent of Africa, it is important that youth be given the space to advocate for increased education and protection. Youth are being impacted by HIV/AIDS in a number of ways beginning with being the largest affected group to caring for their siblings when their parents die of the disease. The growing number of youth and adolescents who are being orphaned by the disease is devastating, and youth rights are not being respected. The YC delegation along with members of Lentswe La Rona, participants of the Young African Dialogue, and other progressive youth wanted to let policy makers know that youth are ready to be involved in decisions that affect their future.

YC members produced an issue of the Watchdog that was distributed to the delegates of ICASA, as well as giving a workshop entitled “Making the Link Between HIV/AIDS and Young People’s Sexual and Reproductive Rights”. Due to the lack of involvement of youth in programs and policies regarding HIV/AIDS, and given the fact that these very often fail to include a youth perspective, the goal of the workshop was to identify the links of HIV/AIDS and young people’s SRR in terms of prevention, treatment and care. Workshop participants were given tools to identify why it is crucial that these areas be integrated in the larger picture of youth SRR. By using examples of best practices, participants were able to make the link between SRR and HIV/AIDS.
II. External Training

Through our external trainings, we give youth leaders the opportunity to improve their existing advocacy skills as well as gain new ones. Our trainings also provide an opportunity to meet other youth working in the field to exchange experiences and ideas with. The Youth Coalition always aims for diversity in any training that it organizes so that the participants interact with youth from different countries, backgrounds, and cultures.

Youth for Young Women’s Rights Caucus (Y4WR) and Youth for Young Women’s Rights Caucus Side Event: “Celebrating Youth Advocacy for Sexual and Reproductive Rights” - New York, New York USA February 25th – 26th, 2005

Held before the Commission on the Status of Women High-Level UN meeting, the Youth Coalition’s CSW delegation organized a two-day skills sharing and strategy building caucus. This caucus was made up of youth from various countries coming together to organize themselves into a powerful lobby force for the inclusion of young women’s rights in any final documents, as well as to pressure government delegations to uphold their commitment to the Beijing Platform of Action. During the CSW, an effort was made to meet once a day to update each other on side events, and to work on documents such as the Watchdog, fact sheets, and the Youth Statement.

At the side event, held at the Church Centre in New York, members from the Y4WR caucus presented information on the different youth organizations working for sexual and reproductive rights and their organizational agendas, achievements, and future activities. After panel presentations, the audience was encouraged to ask questions and give comments on the presentations. A diverse group of youth and adults came to the side event and asked thought provoking questions that the panellist answered. The Youth Coalition welcomed this opportunity to speak more on youth rights and the goals of the organization.


The International Youth Forum, entitled The Sexual Evolution of Development brought together 62 young people from around the world to discuss Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights issues as they related to the Millennium Development Goals Framework and the broader development agenda.

Participants were selected from over 430 applications from young people from all around the world. The young people invited to participate in the forum came from a variety of different backgrounds, expertises, and ages with the majority being under 26 years of age. As well the Youth Coalition wanted to include as many perspectives as possible in the planning stages of the forum and invited eight external facilitators from different organizations to help plan and deliver the forum. Both the plenaries and the small working groups were held in English, French and Spanish with the help of 6 young interpreters. As well all workshop documents were translated prior to the forum.

The forum was meant to be a space for learning, sharing of experiences, advocacy training, and strategizing for the inclusion of young people’s SRR into the MDG agenda at the national, regional and international levels. The title given to the forum was “the sexual evolution of development”, which aimed to illustrate the link between the development agenda and youth sexual and reproductive rights.

The objectives of the Youth Forum were:

1. To identify young people’s SRHR strategic and specific needs and demands
2. To build a common platform for understanding young people’s SRR from a global perspective
3. To analyze the MDGs with a youth perspective and a human rights based approach, identifying where the gaps are regarding young people’s SRR and making specific recommendations on how to include them in various international agreements
4. To share experiences and knowledge to develop an advocacy campaign/strategy for youth SRR in the frame of the MDGs process at the international and national levels
5. To provide young people with knowledge and skills to include young people’s SRR into the MDGs throughout the process of implementation, monitoring and review
6. To identify the stages of implementation, monitoring and review of the MDGs and how young people can influence and participate in the process at the international and national levels.

Each day of the forum concentrated on different topics and issues. On Day One, facilitators reviewed the issues of youth participation, human rights, sexual and reproductive rights, and the Millennium Development Goals. This was done in order to give all the participants, some of whom may not have been that familiar with one or more of the topics, a chance to start off on common ground. Participants also held small group discussions to identify the key topics they wanted to address during the forum. The second day was dedicated to exploring and analyzing the Millennium Development Goals with a youth perspective and human rights based approach. Participants identified where the gaps are regarding young people’s SRR and made recommendations on how to ensure a stronger presence of youth rights in the MDGs.

On the subsequent days, participants were divided into smaller working groups organized around four of the MDGs that the Youth Coalition identified as being strongly related to SRHR: universal access to primary education (MDG 2), promoting gender equality and empowering women (MDG 3), improving maternal health (MDG 5), and combating HIV/AIDS (MDG 6). During these working group sessions, participants analyzed the goal and provided recommendations on new wording and indicators. They also identified barriers to reaching each goal. Alternating with plenary discussions, participants regularly came together to discuss larger issues and topics that came out of the smaller groups as well as working on overall lobbying skills. The larger plenaries worked to give participants better advocacy and media skills.

Throughout the forum, participants and facilitators explored the MDGs and tried to define ways young people could get involved in the process by creating the Youth Forum Action Plan. The action plan clearly defines the steps participants need to take in order to continue their advocacy to include youth sexual and reproductive rights in the Millennium Development Goals. The action plan also identifies activities youth should try to be present at and what type of follow up should happen. As well participants summarized all recommendations that came up during the forum into a political declaration. This declaration highlighted the major points raised by participants throughout the forum and advocates for the integration of SRR and youth issues into the MDGs.

At the forum, each working group came up with various recommendations for the goal that they were working on. Each group’s recommendations has been synthesized into a booklet outlining how the goals in question are linked with sexual and reproductive rights and what they want to see accomplished for this specific goal. The booklet also links the other MDGs to SRR and provides recommendations on how to involve youth and civil society organizations into the process. As well the Youth Coalition produced a video that shows some of the discussions and outcomes of the forum, while incorporating interviews with the participants to hear about their experience, the forum and their recommendations when it comes to the MDGs. A copy of the Youth Forum video is available online on our website, www.youthcoalition.org.

During the forum, three issues of the Watchdog were produced. The Watchdog articles were written by both participants and facilitators, and expressed their hopes and expectations of the forum. They also described how SRR were perceived in their own countries or the work that they do to promote youth rights. Lastly, participants shared their reactions on different topics addressed in plenaries and working group.

The forum provided participants with the knowledge and skills to advocate for the inclusion of their sexual and reproductive rights in the MDG framework and how to become involved in the process of implementation, monitoring and review. According to participants’ evaluation, the forum improved their knowledge, skills and expertise related to sexual and reproductive health and rights issues, policies and decision-making and created a desire to constantly learn more about these issues. It also gave the
opportunity to the Youth Coalition to bring together a diverse group of young leaders who would take the information and skills gained at the event and not only use it in their work in their home countries, but also to educate other youths whom they work with. Overall the Youth Forum was a tremendous success and helped to unite youth working in the field.

Parallel Workshop “Integrating Sexual and Reproductive Rights in AIDS Prevention and Treatment Strategies: Young Advocates Take Action” at the 10th International Women and Health Meeting– Delhi, India September 21st – 25th, 2005

The YC members selected to attend the IWHM, Tanya Baker (Canada/Trinidad and Tobago) Maria Eugenia Miranda (Argentina) and Gabriela Cano (Mexico), held a parallel workshop at the meeting focusing on HIV/AIDS prevention and young people. The workshop entitled “Integrating Sexual and Reproductive Rights (SRR) into HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment strategies: young advocates take action” took place on the opening day of the IWHM. The workshop attracted a diverse audience of over 50 participants ranging in ages, backgrounds, and nationalities. The participants were divided into three groups, and each group was asked to review a scenario concerning a young person, and HIV/AIDS and debate whether or not that young person had the right to make decisions regarding their access to services (including HIV/AIDS testing), what type of care they should receive, and whether or not the social and cultural reactions to their decisions were justified.

Some of the main discussion points included:
- Perception of age and ability to make an independent choice (14 too young to have sex, 16 no discussion)
- The huge variety in cultural and regional context that was not made explicit in the scenarios
- The need for young men to be involved in the prevention efforts
- What does access to treatment mean? Is it attainable/sustainable?
- The intersectionality of discrimination, gender, age, economic status and how that relates to contracting HIV or receiving treatment

The Youth Coalition considers a workshop successful if it is able to encourage debates and perhaps change mindsets of participants. This was certainly the case at this workshop. Many of the “older” participants in the workshop were against the self-determination of young people when it came to making choices about their own sexual and reproductive rights. Through discussions facilitated by the YC members, a rich debate regarding youth and their autonomy from their parents followed and in the end many of the participants felt that they were able to argue as to why youth should have the ability to make choices concerning their sexuality and rights, by using UN agreements to reinforce these arguments.

Young African Dialogue held before ICASA - Abuja, Nigeria November 29th – 30th, 2005

The Youth Coalition delegation sent to participate at ICASA along with members of Lentswe La Rona, organized a two-day Young African Dialogue with twelve participants from western Africa. Mirlande Demers (Haiti/Canada), Ene Christabel Unobe (Nigeria), and Femi Fasinu (Nigeria) collaborated together with Suzyo Nalungwe (Zambia) from Lentswe to create a participatory event in which the issues most important to youth in Africa were discussed. This dialogue included discussions on HIV/AIDS, youth participation, war and civil conflicts, feminization of HIV/AIDS, among others. This dialogue also served to strategize for the ICASA meeting, and to strengthen the youth presence at the event. At the end of this event the participants felt better informed and more empowered to advocate for their rights during the ICASA conference. Many of the participants felt that dialogues like the one organized are vital for African youth. In the past youth participants to conferences such as ICASA have encountered large obstacles to attend such events because of the lack of funding available to youth participants. By holding events such as the Youth Dialogue, it gives youth the opportunity to meet others working in the field and share ideas, experiences and skills.
III. Information sharing, knowledge generation and awareness raising

By attending meetings were progressive youth are traditionally absent, we hope to convey our message to new audiences. In the past year, the Youth Coalition has made an effort to attend any meeting it can in order to ensure strong youth participation and that attention is paid to youth’s SRR. As well it allows the Youth Coalition to partner with new organizations with which we have not worked with in the past, further allowing us to disseminate our message to policy and decision makers as well as to other youth working in the field.

Strategic Workshop on the World Bank and Sexual and Reproductive Health Washington, DC USA December 4th – 9th, 2005

Population Action International (PAI) extended an invitation for one YC member to represent the organization at a strategic workshop on the World Bank and SRH in Washington, DC. This was in perfect timing as a new YC task force dealing specifically with this issue was created during this year’s Annual General Meeting. This new task force on International Financial Institutions would examine the link between SRR funding and major institutions such as the World Bank. YC member Rikke Olsen (Denmark) was chosen to attend the meeting on behalf of the organization. The meeting was five days in length and covered topics such as WB structure, WB relevance to SRH, and Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes. Attendees of the workshop were also able to meet with senior WB executives to discuss their thoughts on SRH funding and the World Bank.

Representatives from other regional youth organizations were also present at this workshop. Together with these other networks the Youth Coalition commented on the World Bank’s Draft World Development Report and gave recommendations as to programmes and initiatives that should be funded as well as called for greater youth participation in the decision making process. The results of this will be seen when the World Bank releases its report on world development in 2007.

Communications

For an organization such as the Youth Coalition communication plays an important part in the work of disseminating the message of youth participation. As well the organization aims to inform and educate other youth on the issues surrounding sexual and reproductive rights and how to advocate for the inclusion of their rights at all levels of the decision making. Through resources such as the Youth Coalition’s website, the Watchdog, the YCNews, and publications such as the Learning to Speak MDGs booklet, the YC is able to supply information on a variety of subjects and issues.

Website – http://www.youthcoalition.org/
Since the launch of the Youth Coalition’s new website in 2004, we have seen an increase in people accessing the website. Over 14,000 visitors have visited the site to gather information on our activities, on our members and staff, and many other topics. Throughout the year secretariat staff work hard to update the site with new information and resources.

YCNews:
In the last year the YCNews listserv has distributed everything from the latest editions of the Watchdog, information on conferences, to employment and volunteer opportunities for youth. With over 300 subscribers, the list reaches an international audience most of whom rely on the information that we send out to keep current on youth issues in the field of sexual and reproductive rights.

Watchdog:
Due to the large-scale events undertaken by the Youth Coalition in 2005, only 3 regular issues of the Watchdog were produced. However at each and every event issue and topic specific Watchdogs were produced by member delegations as a lobbying tool. In addition fact sheets on youth sexual and reproductive rights and how they related to the event being attended accompanied the issues. The Watchdog accepts articles not only from current members, but also from other youth advocates who may not otherwise have the chance to contribute to such a publication. Communications and Outreach Officer, Pamela Pizarro, is the editor of the Watchdog.
Learning to Speak MDGs:
This publication was developed to help identify the links of youth sexual and reproductive rights and the MDGs. Produced by Youth Coalition members with input from the participants of the International Youth Forum, it identifies how youth SRR can and should be incorporated into the Millennium Development Goals as well as providing new indicators and targets for four of the eight goals. The booklet was officially launched during the civil society hearings in New York in June of 2005. The booklet was also presented at various events throughout the year such as:

Millennium Development Goals, Proposals for the Summit – Brasilia, Brazil August 4th, 2005

Attendined by Youth Coalition members Maria Eugenia Miranda (Argentina) and Joana Chagas (Brazil) this meeting was an opportunity to present the organization’s publication, Learning to Speak MDGs, which was one of the outcome documents of the International Youth Forum that the YC organized. At the Proposals for the Summit conference, Maria Eugenia presented the publication and the recommendations made by the participants of the Youth Forum to those present and received a very positive response. Some of the recommendations included: changing the term maternal mortality to female reproductive health and suggestions for new indicators for each goal. As well Joana was able to contribute to the conference’s declaration in order to ensure that it was both youth inclusive and progressive. Representatives from The Ministry of Gender in Brazil congratulated the delegation on their presentation and on their involvement in the conference.


The Spanish Family Planning Federation invited the Youth Coalition to send one member to a conference in Madrid to discuss sexual and reproductive rights and youth. Also in attendance were parliamentarians from the Spanish government. The objective of the conference was for presenters to make recommendations to the parliamentarians regarding strategic decisions that relate to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and youth. YC member Laura Villa Torres (Mexico) was able to present the findings from the International Youth Forum, and the Learning to Speak MDGs publication. Laura’s presentation was a perfect fit with the conference theme and many of those in attendance were happy to receive a copy of the Youth Coalition’s MDG publication. By using the information gathered at the International Youth Forum, Laura was able to make links between the Spanish experience and other regions of the world including Latin America.

IV. Membership/Internal Training

Every year the Youth Coalition as an organization tries its best to provide its members with an opportunity to engage in internal training. In the past these sessions have given our members increased knowledge of topics that we are working on, as well as an opportunity to come together as an organization and plan for the upcoming year based on the information received.

As well in the past year, we have added to our membership as well as experienced the loss of some of the founding members of the YC. In 2005 seven members of the Youth Coalition left the organization. These members each added something special and will be missed. At the same time, the organization accepted twelve new members from all over the globe including; Latin America, the Caribbean, Scandinavia, South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, West Africa, North America, and Central and Eastern Europe. The Youth Coalition continues to grow and accept new and skilled members in the fight for the recognition of youth’s sexual and reproductive rights.

Annual General Meeting Internal Training – HIV/AIDS with Cynthia Rothschild - Delhi, India Sept 28th – Oct 2nd, 2005

After every internal training session that the Youth Coalition gives the Membership Committee sends out a questionnaire to get a sense of how the session went, and what topic they would like for the following year. For 2005 YC members identified HIV/AIDS as a topic where they felt they needed the most internal
training. This session did not focus on HIV/AIDS the disease, but rather how to better integrate SRR advocating and lobbying into the larger picture on disease prevention and education.

In preparation for the session, the Youth Coalition put out a call for proposals through the YCNEWS listserv, and also through our networks. In response we received 12 applications and choose the proposal from Cynthia Rothschild. Her proposal integrated the youth coalition’s past and present work into a framework for future advocating on HIV/AIDS. Her session covered a wide range of topics, but concentrated on allies within the human rights field with whom the Youth Coalition could potentially partner with in order to receive greater visibility. Members responded quite enthusiastically to this workshop and felt it gave better clarity to the issues surrounding youth SRR and HIV/AIDS as well as how and who to work with to integrate HIV/AIDS into the work of the organization.

In addition to the Internal Training, attendance to the Annual General Meeting gives members new and old, a chance to work face to face on organizational issues and projects. The AGM is also a training for members and staff on organization governance and cross-cultural communication. All members that are able to attend an AGM in person agree that it allows them to become more involved and feel ownership over the work of the organization.

The Youth Coalition Secretariat

Located in Ottawa, Ontario Canada, the Youth Coalition’s secretariat in 2005 was comprised of three full-time staff members: Patricia LaRue – Executive Coordinator; Pamela Pizarro – Communications and Outreach Officer; and Rosario Castro – Administrative Assistant.

As Executive Coordinator, Patricia LaRue, is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day functions of the organization, as well as finances, fundraising, and staff. In her position as the Communications and Outreach Officer, Ms. Pizarro is responsible for all of the organization’s communication work including website management, report writing as dissemination, and in keeping with the Outreach component of her position also helps the Youth Coalition’s Membership Committee outreach to potential members as well as help with the acceptance and orientation of new members. In 2005 a new staff member was added to the secretariat. Rosario Castro became the administrative assistant for the organization and deals with the administrative issues for the office and coordinates logistics for each event that the Youth Coalition attends or organizes.

A Final Thought

During the Beijing +5 process, youth were a small minority of the participants at different meetings and events. In the five years that have passed, youth have increasingly become more involved and more visible, proclaiming that youth participation and inclusion is necessary and demanding the right to be heard. The YC believes that we have played a role in this increase. By helping organize delegations and side events we have given youth a space in which to participate and the tools with which to advocate for youth sexual and reproductive rights.

The Youth Coalition continues to strive for the inclusion of youth in the decision making process. We believe that youth have a right to make decisions that affect their sexual and reproductive health and rights and as such should play an important role in forming the decisions and policies that affect them. In the past year we have once again worked with other incredible youth leaders to push ahead the agenda of youth sexual and reproductive rights. By attending international high-level meetings, conferences, and events Youth Coalition members are exposed to the different decision-making processes and are able to bring their knowledge, experience, and skills to the table. Many times when the members attend a meeting or participate in an event they are told by others how important it is for them to ensure that a progressive youth voice is heard. We welcome the challenges that 2006 will bring to us, and will continue our work in the fight for universal sexual and reproductive rights.