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PRESS RELEASE

Local communities lead the way at AIDS 2008

Red Ribbon Awards honour innovation, courage and impact of local organizations

Mexico City, 7 August, 2008 – Recognizing the critical role that local organizations play in the response to HIV, five community organizations from Ghana, India, Iran, Malawi and Mexico were presented with Red Ribbon Awards at the International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2008) last night.

“These are extraordinary organizations helping to meet the needs of their own communities in often very difficult circumstances,” said Rebecca Grynspan, Director of the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), during the awards ceremony. “In doing so they have shown extraordinary creativity, courage and leadership in responding to the epidemic and achieving tangible results with limited resources.”

Of the more than 550 organizations from 147 countries that were nominated, 25 were awarded US\$ 5,000 and invited to Mexico City to participate in the AIDS 2008.

“All the Red Ribbon participants at this conference are winners,” said As Sy, Director of Partnerships and External Relations for UNAIDS. “We hope that the knowledge and resources gained from AIDS 2008 will help inspire you in your own communities in taking your work to the next level. I know all of us have learned from you and your experiences. This knowledge is truly what the Red Ribbon Awards are about.”

The five winners will each receive US\$20,000 in recognition of their exceptional response to HIV at the local level. The organizations are:

Centre for Popular Education and Human Rights, Ghana

A pioneer in work with men who have sex with men, this Ghanaian group seeks to protect and uphold the rights of all sexual minorities. The centre has provided innovative HIV treatment and mental health services and runs a drop-in clinic for men who have sex with men.

Sanghamitra, A Women’s Collective, India

Sanghamitra is giving a voice to sex workers in Mumbai, India. This women’s collective lobbies for universal condom usage by sex workers, works with the police to protect legal rights as well as with health clinics to improve health services.

Hamyaran Mosbat – The Mashhad Positive Club, Iran

Hamyaran Mosbat works closely with national and international institutions, including religious leaders, to expand access to treatment and care. Its network of HIV clubs offers peer education, prevention workshops, referrals and counseling to people living with HIV and other key populations.

Consol Homes, Malawi

Consol Homes works with over 20,000 children orphaned by AIDS in 250 villages in rural Malawi. Partly run by the orphans themselves, Consol Homes encourages children to become directly involved in dealing with HIV in their own communities.

Fortaleciendo la Diversidad, Mexico

Fortaleciendo la Diversidad is dedicated to improving the quality of life, health and acceptance of transgender populations and sex workers. Through the use of the media and



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artistic events as well as collaboration with the police, they have changed perceptions, decreased prejudice and increased recognition and acceptance.

The Red Ribbon Awards are presented every two years at the International AIDS Conference with the aim of providing a global platform for community-based organizations to display their work and highlight the effectiveness and pivotal role of grassroots action worldwide. It is the second time the awards are being presented; the first was at the 2006 International AIDS Conference in Toronto.

This year the final jury included Crown Princess Mette-Marit of Norway; Edwin Cameron, a South African Supreme Court of Appeals Judge and the first senior South African official to publicly state that he was living with HIV; Didier Drogba, professional footballer and UNDP Goodwill Ambassador; Dr. Helene Gayle, President and CEO of Care International; Elizabeth Mataka, the United Nations Secretary General's Special Envoy for HIV and AIDS in Africa; and Mary Robinson, the first woman president of Ireland and former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The Red Ribbon Award Secretariat is hosted by UNDP and supported by the XVII International AIDS Conference, the Canadian International Development Agency, Irish Aid and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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Broadcast quality video footage of the Awards ceremony is available. Please contact Estelle Fach at tel: +52-55-25-36-20-47, e-mail: estelle.fach@undp.org.

About UNDP: UNDP is the UN's global network to help people meet their development needs and build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, working as a trusted partner with Governments, civil society and the private sector to help them build their own solutions to global and national development challenges. Further information can be found at www.undp.org

About UNAIDS: UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, is an innovative joint venture of the United Nations family, bringing together the efforts and resources of ten UN system organizations in the AIDS response to help the world prevent new HIV infections, care for people living with HIV, and mitigate the impact of the epidemic. UNAIDS Secretariat works on the ground in more than 80 countries worldwide. Cosponsors include UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank. <http://www.unaids.org>

About the XVII International AIDS Conference: AIDS 2008 is the world's largest HIV/AIDS conference and provides an international, open and independent forum for the exchange of ideas, knowledge and research which will inform HIV/AIDS programmes and strengthen prevention, treatment and care efforts worldwide. The theme of AIDS 2008 is Universal Action Now. <http://www.aids2008.org>