The latter is a message that vibrated across Lebanon during the month of December as part of an awareness campaign around HIV/AIDS related issues implemented through capacity development and awareness raising via different media channels. The campaign aimed to target young people all over Lebanon aged 16-29 with a special focus on students of public schools and Lebanese University branches. Supported by H&M’s Fashion Against AIDS - an initiative to help spread the message on HIV/AIDS prevention to young people around the globe - the various components of the campaign were implemented by Masar Association with the overall guidance and monitoring of UNFPA office in Lebanon and the national Y-PEER network and in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health and the National AIDS Control program.
“Let’s Talk” featured a comprehensive capacity development program that included workshops on advocacy and social media. The main objective was to enable around 30 young people from the Y-PEER network to advocate more efficiently for their own wellbeing online and through meetings with celebrities and decision makers.

Awareness raising was also one key pillar of the “Let’s Talk” campaign and hence to be able to attract young people to its main messages, dedicated celebrities got on board being actress Nadine Nassib Njeim, music band Marshrou3 Leila, and DJs Ronin and Nesta. During a press conference held at the UNFPA office on November 18 the celebrities along with Y-PEER focal point in charge Racha Nassar signed a memorandum of understanding making them Y-PEER supporters. Two members from music band Mashrou3 Leila got the chance to travel to Cairo October 23-25 to attend a workshop tailored for Y-PEER celebrities. The workshop was a great opportunity for providing the participants with a better understanding about the youth issues and challenges in the region – particularly in view of the Arab uprisings - as well as skills for formulating and advocating relevant and focused messages for “Let’s Talk” Campaign, oriented to both the media sector as well as the general public/audience. In addition to the Y-PEER celebrities from Lebanon, the Cairo workshop brought together additional celebrities from Egypt, Belarus, Macedonia, as well as Y-PEER members including from Lebanon Racha Nassar – focal point in charge – and Carla Daher - Y-PEER coordinator – who also acted as one of the main facilitators in the training.

“Let’s Talk” featured messages revolving around HIV/AIDS transmission and prevention, stigma and discrimination, and promotion of the 22 voluntary counseling and testing centers operational in various Lebanese regions.

The national media campaign for “Let’s Talk” was conducted under the slogan “Let’s talk about AIDS, if not now then when”. It involved 250 billboards displayed for two weeks in areas surrounding public schools and Lebanese universities across Lebanon. The billboards featured the celebrities with the campaign messages. Two TV spots were also produced featuring the celebrities encouraging young people to talk about HIV/AIDS. Young people also got the chance to discuss different elements of the campaign through their appearance on 3 TV stations: LBC, Future, and Tele Lumiere as well 3 radio stations: Mix FM, Radio Liban, and Monte Carlo radio station. “Let’s Talk” was also featured in 63 newspapers and magazines and web articles. In addition the promotion of preventive messages took place on all social media channels like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube on the below links:
A post campaign evaluation was conducted to measure the impact of the campaign on the target audience. A questionnaire was developed that revolved around the awareness of the ads, the interest triggered, the message comprehension, and the attitudes towards the subject. The results proved that every aspect of the campaign including TV spots and appearances as well as the social media aspects were recognized by the target audience with the slogan “Let’s Talk AIDS” getting the highest recall of 22%. The campaign’s appeal towards the audience was 88% with 70% mentioning that it made them consider helping people living with HIV/AIDS. Around 61% of the young respondents believe that HIV/AIDS is an important topic to be discussed among them.

An Amazing Experience
By: Racha Nassar

This is the only way to describe Global Advisory Board (GAB) meeting. I was lucky to attend the GAB meeting in Manila, Philippine November 2-8. It was great to see how all the networks work under one strategy and use the same methodology. It was also impressive to see how young people are involved in different areas such as capacity building, monitoring and evaluation, advocacy, partnership, fund raising, and communication media in their countries to implement their respective action plans. This is a proof that young people should be more involved as we know the needs of young people best. The GAB meeting was also a chance to learn from each other about the challenges, the difficulties that we face in our national network, and also our success stories.

This meeting helped me learn more about the structure of Y-PEER international as well as its guiding bylaws. It has given me an overview about everything that has been going on in the various networks and offered me a motivation full of great Y-PEER inspiration to go back and work hard in my national network to try to make a difference in this world.
A Handy Handbook

Y-PEER Lebanon is very excited about its new publication “A Peer Educators’ Handbook to STI/HIV/AIDS Prevention.” The handbook, written in English and Arabic, is tailored to young peer educators working in the field of STI/HIV/AIDS prevention programs and aims at providing them with the necessary information to help them carry out awareness sessions in an accurate and youth friendly manner. The topics include modes of transmission and prevention, testing, treatment, stigma and discrimination, and cure of certain sexually transmitted infections, as well as the vulnerability of women to HIV/AIDS and health tips for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Y-PEER volunteers were involved in the development of the handbook with the guidance and revision of UNFPA, National AIDS Control Program, Lebanese Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and the Lebanese Medical Students International Committee-Standing Committee on Reproductive Health including AIDS (LEMSIC-SCORA).

Y-PEER: The HOT MIX

How can one contain all the energy of the Y-PEER members in one short production? Well, the Y-PEER: Hot Mix was able to do just that in eight minutes. The documentary introduces the network in a vibrant style by documenting the many activities conducted by its members since its launch in 2008. The activities include the various trainings, awareness raising sessions, celebrating international days and special events, as well as the national campaigns and all the media appearances. The Hot Mix features UNFPA’s support of youth programming and guidance to the Y-PEER network. Implementing partners such as MASAR and the “Let’s Talk” celebrities have also made an appearance showing their support to the network. The documentary would indeed not be original without its main stars, the Y-PEER members who also share their experiences.