

Y-PEER®

Youth Peer Education Network
L E B A N O N

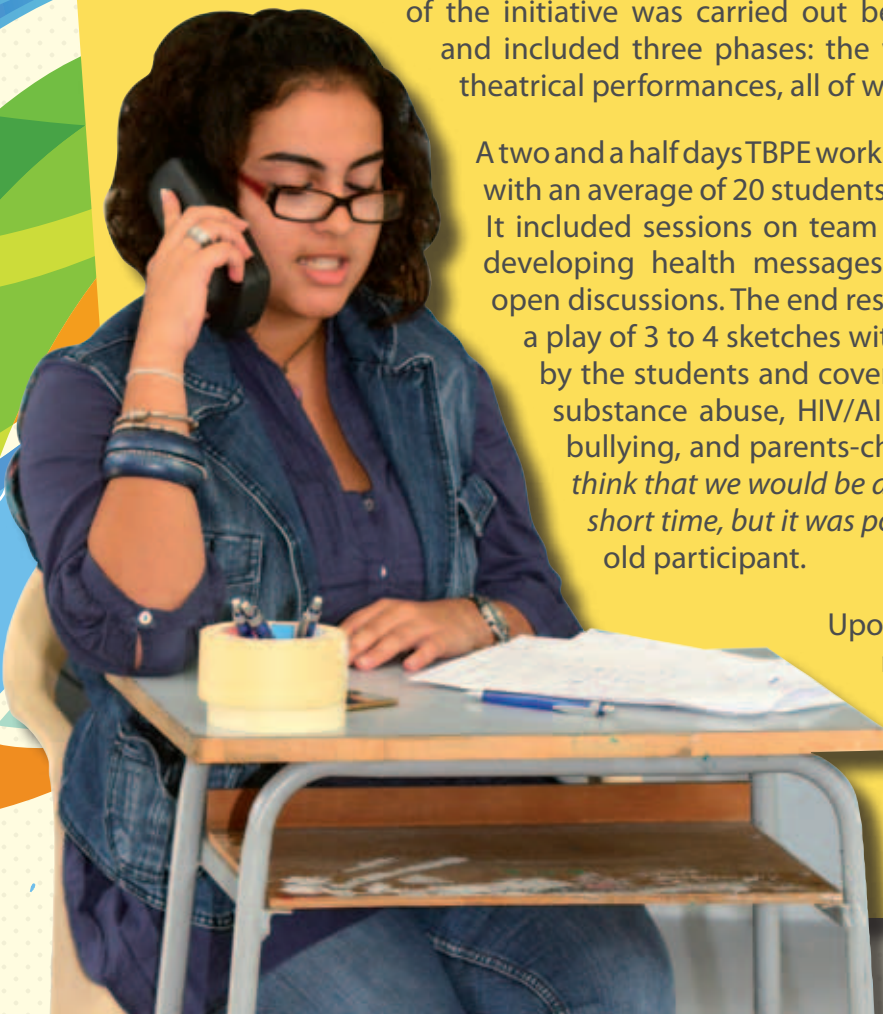
STUDENTS GOT TALENT

Nidal has been pacing across the back stage room for the past 30 minutes. One can easily guess from his face that it is soon show time. In a few minutes, Nidal will be appearing along with his school mates in front of the entire student body to play a role of a young person facing HIV in his school.

Nidal is among the 68 students between the ages of 15 and 19 who were selected to take part in the *Theatre Based Peer Education (TBPE)* initiative, supported by UNFPA, in collaboration with Y-PEER and VAPA (Visual and Performing Arts Association), a local NGO. Four schools got engaged took part in this initiative i.e. the Lebanese Evangelical School (Baabda), Zahrit Al Ihsan School (Ashrafieh), and Al Mabarrat Association represented by Imam Al Hassan School (Southern Suburb) and Al Rahma School (Nabatie). The implementation of the initiative was carried out between June and December 2010 and included three phases: the workshop, the rehearsals, and the theatrical performances, all of which elaborated below.

A two and a half days TBPE workshop was conducted in each school with an average of 20 students and 2 teachers trained per school. It included sessions on team building, improvisational theater, developing health messages within a theatrical sketch, and open discussions. The end result of each workshop consisted of a play of 3 to 4 sketches with different health topics selected by the students and covering one or more themes such as substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, smoking, domestic violence, bullying, and parents-children communication. "I did not think that we would be able to have a whole play in such a short time, but it was possible" explained Hiba, a 16 year old participant.

Upon finishing the workshop, rehearsals were set to get ready for the show. A total of 11 shows were organized in the four participating schools reaching 630 students. >>>





Each show included the theatrical performance, but it did not end here and continued to include an interactive discussion between the audience and the actors facilitated by a Y-PEER peer educator. The latter, through the discussion, allowed the audience to ask questions to the actors who remained in character throughout the dialogue process and made sure all the take-home messages from every scene were clearly portrayed. *"It is great that I am able to help my friends learn more about important issues through acting"* said Nadine as she was preparing for her scene.

The impact of the initiative was assessed through the administration of a pre and post test to the attending audience before the theatrical performance and at the end of the discussion. It was noted that the messages were indeed resonating in the students' minds. For example, a significant 60% of the audience members thought the HIV test is only administered in hospitals and is costly prior to the performance. However, the impact analysis recorded a 35% increase in knowledge about voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) centers after the performance that discussed testing for HIV in Lebanon.

The enthusiastic actors and actresses were also invited to showcase their talents during the World AIDS Day celebration in December 2010 spearheaded by the Y-PEER network. A scene was selected from each school to be performed at the main stage of the UNESCO Palace in Beirut, one of the most prestigious theaters in Lebanon. ■



YOUTH TAKE A STAND

The Slogan *"Our Health... Our Right: Let's Take a Stand"* was not to be missed at the UNESCO Palace where the World AIDS Day celebration took place on December 8 and 9, 2010. The Y-PEER network and in collaboration with several of its partners along with event organizer Ms. Nicole Katul decided to join efforts to mark a very important day for youth in Lebanon, a day where young people were given the chance to take a stand for their health. With high spirits, everybody was mobilized to create a spectacular event targeting high school students that included an interactive NGO fair and a fabulous entertaining show. The event was launched under the High Patronage of the Minister of Public Health, Dr. Mohammad Jawad Khalifeh, represented by the National AIDS Control Program manager, Dr. Mustapha Al Nakib, and with the support of UNFPA.

Almost 1,000 high schools students from public and private schools coming from different regions in Lebanon were invited to this interactive event where they not only received information but also had the chance to express themselves in various ways. The young participants were first escorted by the Y-PEER ushers to the NGO fair that was carefully designed to allow students to rotate among nine different games each organized by a participating partner. The games ranged from life-size board games, a man-made maze, to wheels of knowledge and painting. To allow for a maximum sharing of information, each game discussed a certain topic related to HIV/AIDS such as modes of transmission and prevention, VCT centers, stigma and discrimination, etc. *"The students are interacting in a very positive way with the young people running the stands and seem very interested in the information they are sharing with them"* expressed one of the teachers who escorted her students to the event.

The event did not stop here. The students were invited to the main theater of the UNESCO Palace for an entertaining show that also promoted health messages on HIV/AIDS. The show was hosted by TV celebrity Mr. Tony Baroud and attended by UNFPA's country director, Mr. Ziad Rifai, and assistant representative, Ms. Asma Kurdahi, along with representatives from ministries, UN agencies, NGOs, schools' principles, and parents' associations. The show began with the screening of a short animated film by the Educational Center for Research and Development advocating for the importance of incorporating sexual and reproductive health concepts and information in the school curriculum. The event continued to feature a special theater performance by the students who took part in the theater based peer education initiative. Directed by Ms. Sabine O'jeil from VAPA, each school presented one scene from its original play. *"It was so exciting to perform in front of hundreds of people, a moment I will not forget"* expressed Mohammad upon the end of his performance. More entertainment was still on the program as the final section was introduced to the audience where volunteers from the Lebanese Preparatory School (LPS) danced to the beats of the Y-PEER song *"Let's Fight for Change"* which was performed by Star Acedemy's Maya Nehme, rising star Belime, and Y-PEER volunteer Nour Nimer. ■



Participating Partners

- Amel Association
- Development for People and Nature Association
- Jeunesse Contre La Drogue
- Lebanese Preparatory School
- Lebanon Family Planning Association
- National AIDS Control Program
- Soins Infirmiers et Developement Communautaire
- Think Positive
- Visual and Performing Arts Association

ADVOCACY: A HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

Sixteen Y-PEERs were among the lucky ones to have attended a rather special training on advocacy tailored for young people who wish to voice their issues on different levels. The workshop was organised by Masar, an association that empowers young people by building their capacity to claim for their rights and to participate in public life as decision makers. The workshop took place in Brumana between September 16-19, 2010 and tackled advocacy at the levels of decision makers, media, sponsors and celebrities. It exceeded the theoretical principles and focused on getting hands-on experience within the advocacy process and this is where the Y-PEERs got to put the know-how they received into practice. Four important meetings were set where the Y-PEERs were put to the test. Upon finishing the session on advocacy at the decision makers' level, a meeting was

set with the Minister of Public Health, Dr. Mohammad Jawad Khalifeh who welcomed the participants and listened attentively to their demands. The Y-PEERs worked hard on the meeting agenda where the main focus was what they knew best: peer education. The minister was impressed by their knowledge and skills and promised to further develop the idea of integrating peer education in various health interventions and programmes particularly those related to Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS. Three more tests were set for the Y-PEERs to go through and all went equally well whereby Y-PEERs learned more from the experience of the sales director of Café Najjar, Mr. Adel Jammal, in Lebanon on how to approach sponsors as well as what would attract media to a certain issue from journalist Riad Koubeissy. Finally, celebrity actress Betty Tawtal joined the Y-PEERs at the workshop venue and interacted with them in acting out scenes on advocacy. The participants left the venue ready to prepare an advocacy plan that would voice out their issues and needs in an effective and more strategic way. ■



THE MORE THE MERRIER

Twenty five eager young minds between the ages of 18 and 25 took part in the Y-PEER expansion training organized by Jeunesse Contre La Drogue (JCD) in November 2010. The participants were members of the JCD youth clubs in Shouf, Jounieh, and North Lebanon. They had an extensive agenda of learning more on peer

education, reinforcing their facilitation skills, and getting introduced to specific life skills such as communication, decision making, and assertiveness. Attitudes towards certain topics related to adolescent sexual and reproductive health were also discussed as well as stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS and drug users. The Y-PEER spirit was

evident throughout the training with lots of laughter, energizers, and the infamous Y-PEER anthem *Se Se Kore*. Upon the end of the training, all participants were ready to go to their respective communities and plan for peer education sessions with great enthusiasm. Welcome to the ever growing Y-PEER family in Lebanon. ■

SUBSTANCE ABUSE: BEHIND THE SCENES

Within the context of increasing young people's understanding on the relation between HIV and substance abuse, a training was organized in partnership with Oum el Nour from September 1 to 5, 2010. Oum el Nour is an organization that endeavors to set up programs to welcome, guide, rehabilitate, accompany, and follow up on individuals suffering from drug addiction in addition to a prevention program tailored to youth. Twenty volunteers from Y-PEER attended the workshop and were eager to learn more about the effects of substance abuse and ways to break its vicious spreading cycle.

Starting with a rather different

kind of energizer being a salute to the sun, the workshop facilitators took on the topic of drug abuse from various perspectives. The agenda included theory but also a lot of discussions. The theory included information on substance abuse in terms of the different kinds of illegal drugs and their effect on the body as well as the psychology of addiction. As one of the most affected populations of this condition are young people, participants were pro-actively engaged in learning more and asking a lot of questions. The discussions were a major learning method where participants shared what they know and how they think they can turn things around on the

fight against substance abuse. "Knowledge is power" explained one of the participants, "I have come to understand more about this topic by sharing what I know with my peers" she continued. The workshop included a live testimonial by a previous drug addict who talked with the Y-PEERs about the different phases of his addiction and how he was among the lucky ones to have survived it. The five day training was an eye-opener for many of the participants for it not only helped them learn about the topic but about themselves as well. "Illegal drugs are affecting a big number of young people in Lebanon and now I know how to face it" said Rana during the final evaluation of the workshop. ■



AND THE WINNER IS...

The annual Y-PEER Global Advisory Board (GAB) meeting was held in Istanbul, Turkey in October 2010. Young volunteers from over 50 Y-PEER networks from around the globe gathered to evaluate their respective activities for 2010 and set the plan for an even more active and challenging 2011. The network in Lebanon was presented by Nadim Abu Alwan, focal point in charge, and Carla Daher, Y-PEER coordinator and international coordinator. The 3 day meeting included panels from different Y-PEER partners who also shared their ideas on how the networks can grow and develop in the years to come. More so, Y-PEER celebrities who have been helping promote the networks' activities and efforts at country and regional levels were present and actively engaged in the discussions.

The highlight of the meeting was the selection of Y-PEER Lebanon as the number one network for 2010 for being the most active in terms of the activities planned, the youth reached, the participation in regional and international meetings, and the regular reporting to the international network. Congratulations Y-PEERs in Lebanon for this achievement is due to your amazing efforts. Keep going. ■

EXPANDING FURTHER... REACHING MORE

Trained peer educators of the national Y-PEER network have been super busy planning and executing sessions within their respective communities. To be able to assess the impact of the sessions in terms of appropriateness of the issues, adequacy of the information, and usefulness of the peer to peer approach, pre and post tests were administered to monitor the quality of these sessions and aim at improving them consequently. It is worth noting in this regard that a total of 800 young persons were reached in 2010 through outreach activities and by active Y-PEER members from partner organizations and schools: Lebanon Family Planning Association (LFPA), Beit Atfal Assmoud, Mouvement social, Lycee Fakherddine, and Lycee Hawd el Wileyeh. The sessions covered various geographical locations in Lebanon: Chatila and Burj Al Brajneh Palestinian

camp, Al Miri in Hasbaya, as well as El Fedus, Halba, and El Saky in the south.

To help them deliver their health messages in an interactive manner, the peer educators used two main tools namely the board game "My Health and Safety" and the movie "And the Dream Changed". Both tools tackle several issues related to HI/AIDS such as modes of prevention and transmission, stigma and discrimination, and access to information. The analyses of the impact revealed significant improvement in knowledge on several topics. Under the theme of stigma and discrimination, for instance, while 11.3% of the respondents agreed to the statement "women are the reason for the spread of the HIV virus" prior to the session, the proportion agreeing to the latter statement dropped to 2.2% after the session.

Another example comes from learning about modes of transmission and related misconceptions where a reported 15% of the respondents agreed to the statement "infection with HIV can result from sitting next to an infected person" before the session compared to 7.9% after the session.

These encouraging results have motivated Y-PEERs to plan further sessions and set outreach as one of their main priorities in 2011. So watch out, we may be coming to a place near YOU! ■



NEWS

Y-PEER's Ali Jammoul, Wissam Samhat, and Rachel Mallah participated in the World Youth Conference that took place in Leon, Mexico between August 22 to 24, 2010. They were among the panelists in UNFPA's roundtable dialogue "Generation of Change: Young People and Culture"

Focal Point in Charge, Nadim Abu Alwan, was selected to represent the Y-PEER Arab networks in UNFPA's Global Youth Advisory Panel (GYAP) for 2010-2011. The meeting took place in New York, USA between November 1 and 5, 2010. It focused on planning along with several partners the upcoming action plans with a focus on the International Year of Youth (IYY).