



RECENT & UPCOMING CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

- **World AIDS Day, Dec 1**
- **Global Youth Forum, Dec 4-6**
- **Muscat Festival, 30 Jan—28 Feb**
- **International Day for Zero Tolerance of FGM, Feb 6**
- **International Women's Day, March 8**

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Happy New Year!

The GCC Area Office wishes all our readers a very happy new year and season's greetings.

We begin the new year with a renewed commitment to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe, and every young person's potential is fulfilled. And a renewed energy to expanding our work in the GCC region, expanding our focus from population activities to youth and women's development.

There are exciting upcoming large scale projects in the pipeline for 2013 including the launch of the CEDAW awareness campaign, in an effort to highlight the successes of the Sultanate in this



Season's Greeting from the UNFPA GCC Area Office in Muscat!

regard, and ensure that every person living in the country is aware of the CEDAW and their rights. This has been in the planning stages and is now ready for a 2013 launch so keep up to date through our website and social media for more details.

In addition to this and other activities in this newsletter, the office is also planning a tour of the GCC stakeholders to expand the reach of GCC programmes and ensure a more geographic coverage in 2013, and new projects in previously untapped areas.

AccessRH Training for MOH

The Procurement Services Branch (PSB) of the UNFPA which is based in Copenhagen sent a team to train the UNFPA staff on the new AccessRH procurement service tool for RH services and commodities. The new tool features an extensive and easy to use catalogue, and is designed to reduce lead times

and improve efficiency and quality of procurement through UNFPA.

After training the UNFPA staff, partners from relevant departments at the MOH, including Women's Health, Medical Supplies, and HIV/AIDS, and partners from relevant NGOs were invited to take part in the training to

empower them to use the new tool and procure through the UNFPA.

The training was given positive feedback and requests have already begun for utilization of the new tool and procurement through PSB with the coordination and assistance of the GCC Area Office.



The LG Bus exclusively for UNFPA and partners

The Oman Midwifery Team had a chance to share experiences and best practices at a regional level

The members of the Youth Coalition, 4 of which are talented young women from the GCC



Partnering with the Private Sector

After being approached by LG Electronics as an addition to their CSR profile, a partnership was forged with the UNFPA GCC Area Office. The office hosted a high level meeting with major stakeholders from the Ministry of Health Narcotics Division, MOH HIV Section, National Centre For Statistics and Information and Y-PEER Oman.

The bus was brought for viewing and discussion of the po-

tentials for use including HIV testing in remote areas whilst still maintaining privacy and anonymity of patients. Other potential uses included Y-PEER activities that can expand from the current Muscat and Buraimi focused activities and spread the message of Y-PEER and empower more youth in previously untapped regions.

First events are planned for 2013, including collaborations with various departments of

the MOH, Y-PEER and use in other youth activities nationwide, and to support the new members of Y-PEER that are being trained in the various regions.

This is an exciting new partnership with the private sector and will help expand the scope and reach of UNFPA's mandate, as well as empower and enable offshoot projects. It is also the first of many private sector partnerships.

Supporting Midwives

For the first time, the GCC Area Office supported a midwifery programme—an important component of the UNFPA mandate.

The Office supported a team of 3 from Oman, a midwife, senior midwife at the MOH and a midwifery coordinator to take part in the MENA Inau-

gural Midwifery Workshop and Conference in November. The workshop focused on best practices and lessons learned in the region, and gave a chance to the Omani participants to highlight the strengths and advances of the reproductive health system in the Sultanate. It also gave them a chance to network and

learn from other systems, especially in more challenging areas of the region and how to overcome those challenges.

The participants were filled with positive reviews on the workshop and came back enthusiastic to begin a collaboration with the UNFPA and further strengthen the Midwifery programme in Oman.

Arab Youth Coalition for ICPD Beyond 2015

As the ICPD PoA will come to an end in 2014, youth organizations in the Arab region will have an important opportunity to influence the review of ICPD PoA and the ICPD agenda beyond 2014. In November, UNFPA Arab States Regional Office convened a meeting that aimed at gathering

youth organizations and youth serving institutions to establish informal youth Civil Society coalition to participate in the ICPD PoA review process. It also aimed to discuss the

Joining over 70 youth from most of the Arab States were 4 talented female youth from the GCC, specifically, 2 young women from Oman and another 2 from Bahrain. Supported by the GCC Area Office, these 4 talented women were

chosen to take part in the coalition in the efforts of youth inclusion in the national ICPD review which is currently ongoing.

After the meeting they are going to spend the next year connecting with other member of the coalition in the region and engaging decision takers and policy makers nationwide to ensure the country is fulfilling its goals towards the ICPD agenda.

Women’s Health Review in Oman



A mission which brought together the UNFPA, WHO and MOH in Oman concluded in December with a debrief of the findings of the 2 consultants that were brought here for this purpose. 2 outstanding experts in

Successes and future challenges the field were identified and hired as consultants to perform a complete review of the women's health situation in Oman.

for Women's Health in After 2 weeks, and travel to the various regions of the Sultanate, the mission concluded today and preliminary findings were shared, as well as recommendations to further improve and build on the successes of the Omani health system.

The health system in Oman is a beacon in the region for the giant strides it's taken in the last 40 years in the health care system, starting from only

1 hospital and a few health centers with scarcely any Women's Health in the early 1970's, the health system is now a robust one as was highlighted by the consultants.

Recommendations were received well by the officials at the MOH and steps are already being planned in this regard, including exploring barriers to modern contraceptive use, as the uptake seems to have stagnated at 29%.

This is one in a series of missions looking into reproductive health by the GCC area office further promoting the mandate and goals of the UNFPA to ensure a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe, and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

The successes of the puppet theatre go beyond the region and is now featured in international media.

Continuing Media Coverage of Puppet Theatre TOT

In our last newsletter we covered extensive detail on the innovative and first of it's kind Puppetry Theater TOT—Oman 2012, which took place as a 5 day workshop and final performance in May of 2012. Since then a video has been produced which highlights the technique and amazing pro-

gress which was experienced by the participants and a glimpse at the final performance. The video is featured on our website and can be seen [here](#).

The international development magazine also featured a full length piece on the initiative, it's context and im-

portance as an alternative tool for raising awareness, that piece can be viewed [here](#).

The continuing attention highlights the importance of a repeat workshop on a regional scale, which is planned for later this year.

Participation at the Global Youth Forum

Nine hundred youth leaders, representatives of governments, UN agencies, non-governmental and private sector organizations convened in Bali from 4-6 December 2012 for the ICPD Global Youth Forum.

Hosted by the Indonesian Government and UNFPA, establishing the future UN agenda for the 43% of

the world currently under the age of 25. Among them, 3 talented youths from Oman, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia were hand-picked from hundreds of applicants to attend this once in a life-time opportunity, supported by the GCC Area Office. With the continuing commitment to youth by the GCC Area Office, this was just one of many youth delegations being sent

to international conferences and trainings to ensure the development, participation and continuing nurturing of youth in the GCC.



The GYF was a landmark conference that the office participated in by support of 3 GCC representatives.

HIV/AIDS Programme Highlight

The UNFPA GCC Area office with the MOH are planning to launch the pilot of the VCT programme in three health centers in Muscat and Sohar, which will be anonymous enabling any person to walk in and get tested. They are also planning to introduce the three method rapid testing so results can be obtained an hour after testing, as opposed to the current

method which can take up to ten days if the result is positive.

In preparation for this, there are training programmes being held in various regions of the Sultanate to train HIV counselors on how to better handle those coming in for VCT. This initiative aims to shift public perceptions of HIV/AIDS and encourage high risk groups to come forward and get tested,

which in turn will promote encouragement of safer behavior and consequently help reverse the spread and bring down numbers of new infections.

The newly trained Y-PEER Members in Buraimi celebrated World AIDS Day with a focus on the harms of stigma and discrimination amongst high school students in the city. The activity, in true

Y-PEER methodology, involved activities and competitions to teach the students about HIV. The activity also included an education puppetry theatre performance which focused on HIV transmission and why it is important not to stigmatize those living with the virus.

One Focal Point from Buraimi, and 3 others from Muscat took part in the GCC HIV Summit which was hosted by the Ministry of Education and hosted in Oman. The MOE have been enthusiastic about the knowledge and methodology of the Y-PEER and have been suggesting collaborative nationwide efforts. The UNFPA as supporters of the summit, the participants and the Y-PEER as a whole were delighted at the good work all their training has produced and the importance of peer education especially when targeting HIV education and young people.



World AIDS Day Activity in Buraimi



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