



RECENT CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

- **Puppetry Theatre TOT—Oman** 2012, 8-13 May
- **Earth Day,** 22nd April
- **International Women's Day,** 8th March
- **Muscat Festival,** 15—22 February
- **World AIDS Day,** 12th December

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Puppetry Theatre TOT a Roaring Success

The office organized a five day workshop from the 8-12th of May 2012, which culminated in an exciting innovative final performance on the 13th of May. The workshop, which was performed by trainers from the Arab Puppet Theatre Foundation with participants from the Ministry of Education, Oman Association for the Disabled, The Association of Early Intervention for Children with Disability and members of the Y-PEER Oman network, spanned a general overview of puppetry encompassing its history and significance in the Arab world as well as how to construct these puppets from cheap easily available material as well from recycled material, and material which can be found around the household and



A participant from Y-PEER Oman proudly holds up her self made glove puppets. These puppets were made from paper-mache, and easily available fabrics.

schools. A special focus was given to how puppetry can be used as an awareness raising and teaching tool; adding to the entertainment methodology of the Y-PEER network.

The most exciting and visually stimulating technique taught was using self-built shadow puppets, which offer an effective tool for delivering sensitive messages. All techniques were used in the final

performance, using the puppets created by the participants in the intensive 5 day programme.

The performance was attended by a number of VIPs and received a welcoming reception from all those present. Mr. Mahmoud Al Hourani, Director of the APTF, concluded with high praise for the Omani participants, and the hope of returning to further polish their skills.

GCC Area Office Online

In the past year, the UNFPA GCC Office launched a new website, which is updated with news and pictures, as well as a twitter account to keep followers up to date on news, events, and points of interest related to the UNFPA mandate.

The office also launched new websites for the Y-PEER networks in Oman and Bahrain, which are now being completely run and managed voluntarily by members of the networks.

To view the latest updates of the GCC Area Office's activities

please visit the various new media places on the following links:

- gcc.unfpa.org
- www.twitter.com/UNFPAGCC
- www.ypeeroman.net
- www.ypeerbahrain.net

Y-PEER Oman Continue to Raise Awareness



A Y-PEER member during Muscat Festival

The past year has been a busy one for the Y-PEER Oman network, as they continue to train new members, go into schools and colleges to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and other youth relevant issues and participate in national and large scale events. Last year Y-PEER Oman participated with a great reception at the Khareef Salalah Festival, where they were able to meet youth outside their usual outreach zone. They also participated at Muscat Festival both

last year and in January of 2012, with great reception and media coverage. Through this they were able to gain a lot of interest from new members, and institutions, who subsequently invited them to participate in various events.

In February 2012, Mazoon Said Al Zadjali, a Y-PEER Oman Focal Point, was named Y-PEER International Peer Of The Month, with a feature on their website and newsletter.

The Y-PEERs also introduced

new edutainment activities to their Peer Education training. A modified version of Snakes & Ladders, which answers basic questions on HIV, and battles sensitive issues like transmission, and stigma and discrimination. And Puppetry Theatre that allows them to address topics and speak openly, but in a playful manner, about any other youth relevant concerns.

Read the feature story on Y-PEERs in Times of Oman [here](#)

The completed missions were concluded with positive response and feedback from Partners at the CDSI

KSA Population Activities Underway

Activities through the trust fund (TF) with the Central Department of Statistics and Information (CDSI) of the Ministry of Economy and Planning in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have been progressing well in the last months. Two missions, have been completed and one is in the final stage.

These completed missions, one of which is related to training

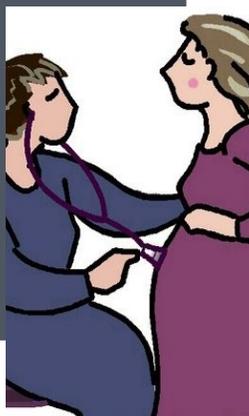
and capacity building of CDSI staff members in Geographic Information System (GIS), have been requested by our counterparts due to the success and regional experience of the UNFPA GCC Area Office. This, and the second completed mission—a sampling study—were concluded with a positive response both to the consultant and to the UNFPA

office.

The thirds mission scheduled which is in training of staff in demographic analysis techniques is expected to go as smoothly and positively as the others, and the office hopes to expand work in KSA with TFs in other ministries.

Proposals were submitted to all relevant ministries and are currently in discussion.

A Salute to Midwives



Investing in Midwifery Pays

UNFPA GCC Area Office featured heavily in a full page spread in Oman's Daily Observer titled "[A Salute To Midwives](#)" which was published on the 5th of May—International day of the Midwife, highlighting the great contributions of the

UNFPA both regionally and globally in the training and empowerment of this very essential health care provider.

Due to skilled attendants being available for 92% of births, the Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) is low at 16 per 100,000 births, and Oman is being seen as a country that is

hailed for its successes in Maternal Health, due largely to the availability of highly skilled midwives.

The Office recently provided its technical assistance to explore how to further reduce the low MMR and to assess better surveillance mechanisms.

CEDAW Introduced to Public in Oman



Since signing and ratification of the CEDAW in Oman in 2005, much work has been done in incorporating the articles into national legislation. With UNFPA as the lead agency in this respect, the first report was submitted in 2009, and since

Attendees of the seminar in Buraimi for IWD

then planning has been underway on how best to raise awareness to all nationals and those residing in Oman.

In late 2011, the UNFPA GCC Area Office Representative a.i Mr. Asr Tson visited regions with partners from the Ministry of Social Development (MOSD) to begin introducing the CEDAW and the work Oman has done.

On international Women's Day,

8th March 2012, workshops were held by the MOSD, with the support of the UNFPA, around the country with the large one being in Buraimi in the west to introduce CEDAW to selected groups of women from the community from various sectors including the Omani Women's Association and women involved in local government offices. For more information read the front page Oman Observer article about IWD [here](#).

Oman remains a pioneer in the field of Women's rights.

This initiative aimed to build on existing IGA activities in the Sultanate

IGA Project Concludes Successfully

The UNFPA GCC Area Office provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Social Development to conduct a national wide Income Generating Activities assessment. The initiative with the MOSD aimed to build on existing IGA activities of the ministry, which target social welfare recipients. Following the national wide situation analysis of all existing

IGAs, ministry staff were trained on how to use specifically designed monitoring and evaluation (M&E) sheets which were standardized during this mission. The staff were also trained on data entry for both responsible parties and regional focal points who work on the field.

The final report and recommendations produced were discussed on a high level internal strategic meeting

at the ministry to plan the way forward in this regard.

Following this successful programme, a proposal was sent to the MOSD to establish a TF to continue the work, and expand and develop other sections and projects within the ministry; especially in the fields of strategic planning and assessment of social indicators.

Oman TF—Beyond the Census

Oman TF was established in 2007 with the Ministry of National Economy (MONE) and has been working successfully since. Most recently several activities have been implemented, such as: a recurring sampling mission that has taken place annually, a continuing data analysis and the review of the census 2010, including producing material for the general public about various statis-

tics and demographic information.

Beyond the census activities, the office has been coordinating with MONE for the organization of a regional partnership meeting that is currently under discussion, and is planned to bring together the primary partners of the GCC Area Office from the GCC governments to strategize their priorities of re-

gional programming after the unrests, while assuring a key positioning of UNFPA's mandate, based on the Strategic Business Plan with a special focus on Youth. With the growing population in the Arab world, a meeting like this is set to take place at a necessary and crucial time.



Displays of Omani culture.

UN Theme Group Battle Stigma & Discrimination

The UN Theme Group (UNTG) and the UN Task Force (UNTF) on HIV/AIDS in Oman, of which the UNFPA plays an active and vital role have been busy the past year with studies, work-shops, and concluding the final phase of the Nationwide Wide "Lets Talk AIDS" campaign. The campaign has been hugely successful, with members of the Y-PEER



A Y-PEER stand on World AIDS Day

network playing an important role as the implementing arm in outreaching to young people and raising awareness on HIV in Oman through various forums including festivals and World AIDS Day.

The final phase raised awareness about the HIV/AIDS treatment services available in Oman and involved engaging with People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) to better understand their woes. Currently a closed workshop is set to take place with 20-30 PLWHA to discuss all aspects of life which are met with stigma and discrimination for those living with the virus and how best to involve policy and decision makers to battle social norms that are causing isolation to them.

The Ministry of Health (MOH)

are also set to pilot voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) 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.



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UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, is an international development agency that promotes the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. UNFPA supports countries in using population data for policies and programmes to reduce poverty and to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV/AIDS, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect.

UNFPA—Because everyone counts!