



PRESS RELEASE

Red Ribbon Award: call for nominations to honour community leadership and action on AIDS

Colombo, Nov 30: The call for nominations for the Red Ribbon Award for 2008 to honour community leadership and action on AIDS across the world was announced here today. The biennial award, which will be presented at the 17th International AIDS Conference in Mexico in 2008, will honour 25 community-based organisations for their contributions in responding to the AIDS epidemic.

The call for nominations is being simultaneously launched in Mexico City and Geneva as well.

The first Red Ribbon Award, launched in 2006, had received 500 nominations from 100 countries. Six of the 25 finalists for the Award were from Asia and the Pacific.

“For over 20 years, communities hard hit by AIDS have been at the forefront of the response. They have shown extraordinary courage and resilience, and their leadership has been central to addressing the challenges posed by the epidemic,” said UNDP Administrator Kemal Dervis.

Dr. Peter Piot, Executive Director, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) said: “Communities are at the forefront of addressing the core challenges of HIV. Honouring their work and encouraging the replication of community initiatives is essential for a successful global response.”

Launching the call for nominations here today, Jeff O’Malley, Director, HIV/AIDS Group, UNDP, New York, commended the exceptional contribution of communities in containing the spread of HIV and reducing its impact on people in the Asia Pacific region. “We have brilliant examples of community action and leadership across the entire spectrum of the response to HIV in the region. In fact, one thing that stands out in the Asia Pacific success story is community action,” he said. The region abounds with examples of community action towards expanding the coverage of prevention and treatment; fighting stigma and discrimination; helping affected people and families cope with the impact of the epidemic; and the socio-economic empowerment of people living with HIV, he said. “However, some of them are unheard and unsung. It is time to recognise them and honour them,” he said.

“It is the quality of action and leadership that matters,” said Ms. Caitlin Wiesen, HIV/AIDS Practice Team Leader and Regional Programme Coordinator, Asia and the

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Pacific, UNDP Regional Centre in Colombo, calling for nominations that will reflect the real picture of community action and leadership in the region. "The rest of the world stands to gain from the experience of the communities in the Asia Pacific region. The Red Ribbon Award, besides helping to strengthen the contribution of communities, will also showcase their work as a good practice," she added, citing the examples from the region.

One of the finalists from the inaugural Red Ribbon Award, Durjoy Narhi Shongo from Bangladesh, participated in the launch event in Colombo. "Now the authorities treat us with more respect. There is significant decrease in the discrimination we had to face as advocates for sex workers," said Mr. Syed Rahman from Durjoy Narhi Shongo.

The Red Ribbon Award aims to provide a global platform to communities touched by HIV. All 25 awardees will receive a monetary prize of US\$ 5,000 each and five of them will receive special recognition and an additional US\$ 15,000 each. The five award categories for outstanding community leadership and action on AIDS are:

- Providing access to care, treatment and support for people living with HIV
- Promoting human rights and addressing social injustices such as homophobia, sexism and any other form of stigma and discrimination
- Empowering women and girls and addressing gender inequalities that fuel the spread of HIV
- Providing support to children orphaned by AIDS and other vulnerable children
- Promoting HIV prevention programs and services

The Red Ribbon Award is supported by the entire UNAIDS family and the organisers of the XVII International AIDS Conference.

Representatives from the 25 winning communities will be invited to the 2008 International AIDS Conference in Mexico City, where they will anchor a community dialogue space. This innovative concept provides community organizations with an opportunity to discuss their priorities, highlight their challenges, and engage with global leaders.

Nominations will be accepted from **1 December 2007 through 29 February 2008**. Information can be found on www.redribbonaward.org or by contacting redribbonaward@undp.org. All community-based organisations working to halt and reverse the spread of HIV are encouraged to apply.

For more information and to nominate, please visit www.redribbonaward.org or contact:

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Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

UNAIDS is an innovative joint venture of the United Nations, bringing together the efforts and resources of the UNAIDS Secretariat and ten UN system organizations in the AIDS response. The Secretariat headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland—with staff on the ground in more than 80 countries. Coherent action on AIDS by the UN system is coordinated in countries through UN theme groups, and joint programmes on AIDS. UNAIDS' Cosponsors include UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank. www.unaids.org

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. UNDP is on the ground in 166 countries, working to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and reduce its impact. As a co-sponsor of UNAIDS, it helps countries put HIV/AIDS at the centre of national development and poverty reduction strategies; build national capacity to mobilize all levels of government and civil society for a coordinated and effective response to the epidemic; and protect the rights of people living with AIDS, women, and vulnerable populations. www.undp.org

XVII International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2008)

The International AIDS Conference is the most important gathering for the release and discussion of the scientific, programmatic and policy developments in the global response to HIV/AIDS. As the largest and most diverse international gathering devoted to a global health issue, the conference brings together the movement of people responding to the HIV/AIDS epidemic to share their lessons and together stake out the road ahead. AIDS 2008's vision is a conference that promotes scientific excellence and inquiry, encourages individual and collective action and dialogue, and fosters accountability. www.iasociety.org