

Report on the 2009 International Advisory Board Strategic Planning Meeting

International AIDS Candlelight Memorial

Hosted by the Global Health Council

September 28 – October 2, 2009

M Plaza Hotel

Accra, Ghana

SUMMARY

The International AIDS Candlelight Memorial, a program of the Global Health Council, is the world's oldest public event for AIDS awareness (1983) and one of today's largest grassroots campaigns against the disease. Every year, the Council brings together members of the program's International Advisory Board to set the strategy for the coming memorial season, and to address issues and initiatives critical to the historic program. This year, the board convened its annual meeting in Accra, Ghana – the Candlelight Memorial's first official global function in West Africa (see agenda attached). The board represents six world regions and 11 different countries, and is designed to ensure community voice and maintain the Candlelight Memorial as a relevant social intervention in the response to HIV/AIDS.



The 2007-2010 International Advisory Board with staff from Pathfinder Outreach Ministries, Accra.

PARTICIPANTS

Global Health Council Staff

Todd Lawrence, International Outreach Coordinator, Global Health Council

Neda Dowlatshahi, International Outreach Assistant, Global Health Council

David Olson, Director of Policy Communications, Global Health Council

International Advisory Board Members

Merlene Blackett, AIDS Society of Barbados, Inc., Barbados

Dave Chandler, Youth Now Collaborative/Volunteer Center of Southern Arizona, United States

Mayowa Joel, Communication for Development Center, Nigeria

O'Leo Lokai, RED Initiatives, Trinidad & Tobago

George McGarry, Siouxland & Local Area AIDS Project, United States

Hector Nihal, AIDS Awareness Society, Pakistan

Bernadette Otieno, St. Rita's Orphan Care, Kenya
 Soledad Perpiñan, Third World Movement Against the Exploitation of Women, Philippines
 Eamonn Smythe, New Zealand AIDS Foundation, New Zealand
 Mzia Tabatadze, Save the Children, Georgia
 Ivo Procházka, Czech AIDS Help Society, Czech Republic

National Coordinators

Chief Austin Arinze Obiefuna, Afro Global Alliance International, Ghana

GOALS

The goals of the meeting, each of which was addressed through sessions or activities, were:

- Explore successes/challenges in 2009
- Revise goals, objectives, and activities
- Finalize the new certificate program
- Develop the advocacy platform/activities
- Create a media plan for 2010
- Improve our leadership structure/systems
- Understand HIV/AIDS in the Ghanaian context



Members of the board discussed a variety of topics, from programmatic goals to annual strategy.

PRIMARY ACTIVITIES

1. Opening Session & Speeches by Ghana AIDS Leaders

To welcome the board to Ghana, representatives from several of Ghana's leading agencies addressing



Representatives from Ghana's leading HIV and AIDS agencies opened the meeting and welcomed the board.

HIV/AIDS in the country (including the Ghana AIDS Commission, UNAIDS, the World Health Organization, the National AIDS Control Programme and the National TB Control Programme) provided welcoming remarks, followed by GHC International Outreach Coordinator Todd Lawrence. Members of the Ghanaian press were present and an exchange of questions and comments ensued. In addition to these discussions, board members had an opportunity to discuss the problem of AIDS in Ghana with a number of other organizations and individuals. As was raised in numerous discussions, stigma against

people living with HIV/AIDS in Ghana – as it is in much of the world – continues to be a challenge. Reducing stigma is a major priority of the Candlelight Memorial.

Key Outcomes:

- The GHC staff and board members had an opportunity to interact with some of the country's leading AIDS specialists, and through speeches, learned more about the priorities and strategies of the agencies they represent.
- The GHC and the board educated the speakers and the press about the Candlelight Memorial, promoting involvement in Ghana.
- The speakers were educated directly on the GHC's as well as the Candlelight Memorial's advocacy priorities of reducing stigma and discrimination, ensuring access, increasing resources, and promoting greater involvement by affected communities.



Members gave presentations on the Candlelight Memorial In their countries and regions in 2009.

2. Debrief on the 2009 Memorial

Throughout the week, board members presented on their work through the 2009 Candlelight Memorial in their countries and regions. Presentations revealed passionate communities, artistic interpretations of the event, and continuing growth of the campaign.



David Olson, director for Policy Communications at the Global Health Council, gave a media workshop

Key Outcomes:

- Regional coordinators will give an overall report on the Candlelight from their region the previous year in subsequent meetings, including gaps, challenges, successes, and areas for improvement.
- The GHC will present its own report for the board at future meetings, with a more detailed overview, the status of finances and partnerships, and new directions.

3. Review of the Mission Statement & Strategic Planning for 2010

Todd Lawrence led the board in an exercise to review and revise the Candlelight Memorial mission statement as well as define the program's objectives or "Five Pillars of Activism" – leadership, partnership, advocacy, awareness, and service. Groups were assigned a "pillar" or objective according to a chart and asked to fill in activities according to that objective and report to the board. The board also examined and revised the program mission statement.

Key Outcomes:

- The revised mission statement will be posted online.
- The 2010 international Candlelight Memorial theme and poster were selected during the meeting and will be officially unveiled on December 1st, 2009 (World AIDS Day) – the traditional date of the theme presentation.

4. The Certificate in Community Mobilization Program

In an effort to implement its strategic plan as well as its newly-established objectives, the board agreed to move forward on development of a Certificate in Community Mobilization program to be launched in the coming year. The certificate program will recognize and promote the growth of community mobilizing skills and collect information about the impact of the Candlelight Memorial. George McGarry and Dave Chandler (both United States) facilitated a discussion on the certificate program's application

process and requirements, while Eamonn Smythe (New Zealand) and Ivo Procházka (Czech Republic) discussed evaluation.



Board members met with local groups in Ghana addressing HIV/AIDS, including the Society of Women Against AIDS.

Key Outcomes:

- The GHC will structure guidance provided by the board and develop the certificate program.
- The first iteration of the certificate program will likely be implemented for the 2010 season and advertised as a one-year pilot program.
- The application process for the certificate program will be separate from the general program, and certificates will be conferred to the coordinator and their organization.
- A letter of recognition should be provided to coordinators who complete the general program and submit an evaluation.

5. The Candlelight Advocacy Priorities

After a brief introduction by Todd Lawrence describing the GHC's Global AIDS Roundtable and global AIDS priorities, Mayowa Joel (Nigeria) and Bernadette Otieno (Kenya) led a discussion about the program's advocacy priorities. The group reviewed the current Candlelight Advocacy Platform and made minor adjustments to the text to better reflect current needs.

Key Outcomes:

- The revised priorities will be posted and disseminated worldwide for coordinators to share during their memorials.



Board members review work conducted by Pathfinder Outreach Ministries, a local group working on HIV/AIDS.

- The advocacy priorities should be better promoted, including on the worldwide Candlelight poster.

6. How to Develop a Media Relations Plan

David Olson gave a presentation on media outreach to the board, particularly different forms of media, how to use them strategically, and implications for the Candlelight Memorial program. Lucy Adoma Yeboah, a Ghanaian journalist and member of the Association of Journalists for Health, also spoke.



Dr. Angela El-Adas (top right), director of the Ghana AIDS Commission, visited the board during the meeting.

Key Outcomes:

- Board members were presented with a media plan template to create their own media plans for the Candlelight Memorial at the regional level.

7. The Leadership Structure & Roles

The Candlelight Memorial has a leadership structure of regional, national, and community coordinators. This session began with presentations by Mr. Hector Nihal (Pakistan) to confirm regional demarcations, Mr. O'Leo Lokai (Trinidad and Tobago) to review leadership qualities, and

Merlene Blackett (Barbados) to discuss communication systems. The board reviewed and revised roles of these volunteer positions, including eligibility, communication, and reporting, using the Leadership Roles Chart.

Key Outcomes:

- GHC will revise the roles of regional and national coordinators, and their relationship to community coordinators on the website.
- GHC must continue helping national and regional coordinators understand how to utilize each others' positions.

8. Site Visits to Ghanaian Service Organizations & Issues in Ghana

The board had the opportunity to visit two organizations providing HIV/AIDS-related services in Accra: the national chapter of the Society for Women Against AIDS (SWAA), which promotes greater attention to women and children affected by the disease, and Pathfinder Outreach Ministry, which provides care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Key Outcomes:

- Board members gained an understanding about how some Ghanaians are trying to address HIV/AIDS in Accra.
- Both SWAA and Pathfinder became more sensitized to the Candlelight Memorial program.
- Board members and GHC staff learned more about some of the important issues facing Ghanaians around HIV/AIDS and health.
- Global Health Council staff blogged on one project and plans to blog on the other.

9. Rotation of Regional Coordinators

This is the first International Advisory Board for the Candlelight Memorial program and their three-year term is coming to an end (in May 2010). Todd Lawrence facilitated a session about the rotation of board members, which will occur this year during applications. The board discussed the process for rotations.

Key Outcomes:

- Half (one from each region) of the board members would rotate off in May while six new members would be recruited beginning in January during the application period, while retaining gender balance.
- The Council will make the final decision with guidance from a peer review process. Former members will become official “historians” of the Candlelight Memorial program.

SECONDARY ACTIVITIES

1. Meeting with Dr. Angela El-Adas, Ghana AIDS Commission

On October 2nd, Chief Austin Obiefuna (Ghana), Mayowa Joel (Nigeria), and Todd Lawrence met with Dr. Angela El-Adas, director general of the Ghana AIDS Commission (GAC) to discuss the Candlelight Memorial program in Ghana. Although GAC staff members were generally unfamiliar with the program, Dr. El-Adas welcomed the opportunity to incorporate the program as part of the Commission’s outreach and partnership with civil society in Ghana around HIV prevention.



Board members and Global Health Council staff interacted with Council member organizations during a special reception.

Key Outcomes:

- Dr. El-Adas and her staff committed to promoting the Candlelight Memorial as a part of the Commission’s strategic plan of engaging community groups in the response to AIDS in Ghana.
- The Commission learned more about the Candlelight Memorial program, including its advocacy priorities, which were articulated for the director.
- Chief Austin Obiefuna (Ghana) will be in touch with Dr. El-Adas and her staff about moving the program forward in 2010.

2. Reception for Global Health Council Ghanaian Membership

Also on October 2nd, the GHC held a special reception at the M Plaza Hotel for representatives of its Ghanaian member organizations. The reception was an opportunity to introduce GHC staff and Candlelight Memorial board members, learn about member programs and their perspectives on membership, and how to better engage them in Council activities. Approximately seven member organizations were represented, along with representatives of Ghana’s Coalition of NGOs for Health.

Key Outcomes:

- The occasion served to promote the GHC and membership, and the Candlelight Memorial.
- GHC staff conducted six informal video interviews with members about their experience as members and how the Council can better serve them in the future.
- Candlelight Memorial board members learned more about local non-governmental organizations and developed international linkages.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information, please contact...

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