

Growing Up

A NEWSLETTER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Action Health Incorporated
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Growing Up is published quarterly in Lagos, Nigeria by Action Health Incorporated (AHI). AHI is a non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to the promotion of adolescent health and development. We serve as an advocate and a catalyst for change in the present poor status of adolescents' well being by increasing public awareness and implementing innovative education, healthcare and youth development programmes.

TRUSTEES

Dr. Adebunmi Odiakosa
Rev. (Dr.) Chris Omeben
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Dr. Uwem U. Esiet
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Mr. Olu Lutherking
Mrs. 'Nike O. Esiet

PRODUCTION TEAM

Editor-in-Chief
'Nike O. Esiet

Editorial Team
'Bunmi Adeniyi
Francis Akpan

Contributing Writers
Feyi Fowowe
Nelly Onwordi

Cover Photo
Tunde Adenuga, Oluwatosin Bello,
Bukola Da Silva

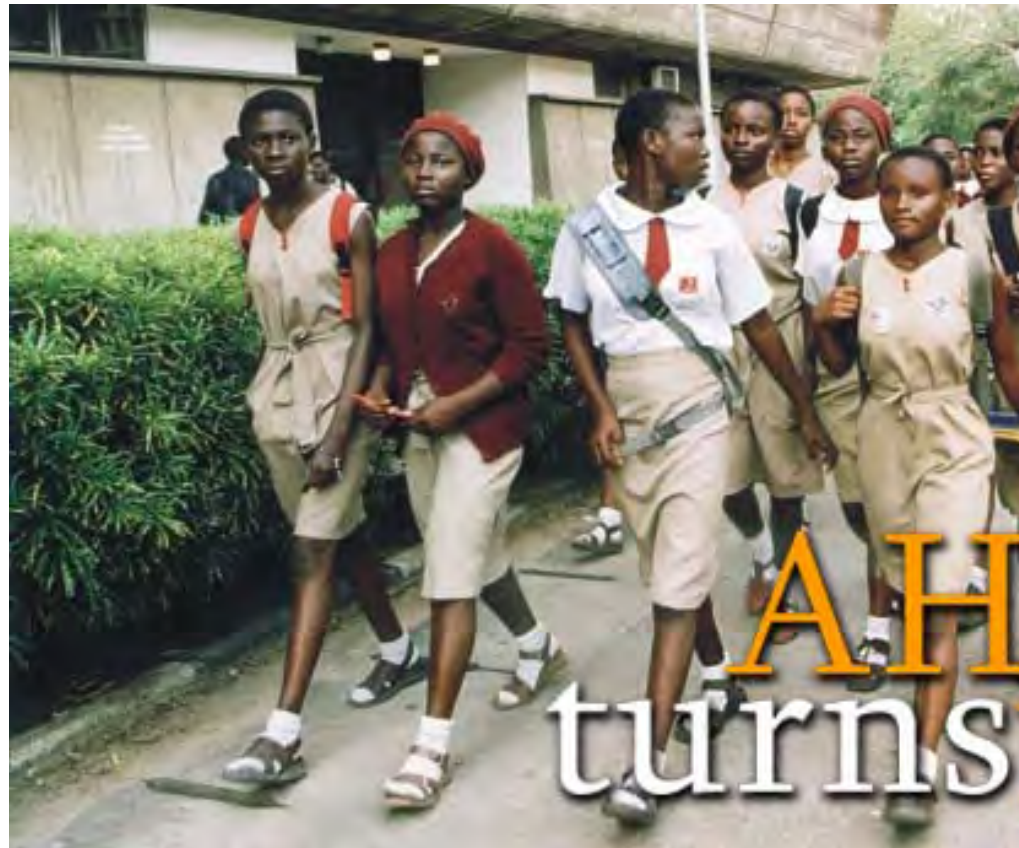
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AHI's Youth Centre is located at 17 Lawal Street, Off Oweh Street, Jibowu, Lagos, Nigeria.

All correspondence should be addressed to:
The Editor, Growing Up
Action Health Incorporated
P. O. Box 803
Yaba, Lagos.
E-mail: info@actionhealthinc.org
Website: www.actionhealthinc.org

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By Feyi Fowowe

Like a baby who takes its first uncertain but determined step in a bid to forge ahead, Action Health Incorporated (AHI), took that first step fifteen years ago and has fast matured into a teenager who is determined to move on into adulthood. At that time, this teenager was just one big dream - a dream to bring about a change in the area of sexual and reproductive health of young people; a dream to help young girls discover their great potentials and their ability to live assertively; a dream to help young boys take responsible decisions which will help protect their lives and those of their female counterparts. Ultimately, it was a dream to see and experience a Nigeria free from the shackles of HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancies,

child abuse and gender discrimination, to mention just a few. Today, that dream is fast becoming a reality through the 15-year old organisation known as Action Health Incorporated. AHI is dedicated to ensuring that young girls and boys grow up to assume control over their lives by equipping them with factual and basic information, skills and services that would enhance their sexual and reproductive health and human rights.

Action Health Incorporated means different things to different people. To the young, it is a platform on which they can express themselves, develop their creativity and acquire skills that would help them in their decision making processes throughout life. To adults,



it is an avenue for acquiring adequate knowledge and techniques that will enable them achieve success in their interactions with (as well as in their bid to influence) the youths positively. To parents, it is not only the mediator between them and their children but that medium through which such children are equipped with factual and age-appropriate information.

It is no wonder then that many young people feel a sense of nostalgia when describing their experiences while at Action Health Incorporated. For many of them, it is not the organization AHI in itself that awakens this nostalgic feeling and sense of gratitude. Rather, it is the lessons they have learnt, the experiences they have garnered and how these experiences have helped

shape them into better people that bring about such feelings. Oke Idirigbe who was trained as a peer educator by AHI in 1997 says, "AHI has helped me realize that challenges can be turned into opportunities and that I can achieve whatever I set my heart to". Thus, AHI for many young people has been an influencing factor in their resolve and determination to remain focused and to achieve their goals.

How It All Started...

The story of AHI is one that is worth telling. This is because the vision was birthed at a time when there was a culture of silence concerning sexuality issues and widespread disapproval for discussing such issues in public. Young people, as evidenced by the low level of knowledge then, preferred to keep quiet about their sexual and reproductive health challenges. In the alternative, they talked to their peers who were ill equipped to offer any assistance because they too lacked the necessary knowledge and information on these issues. Adults on their own part identified and treated problems relating to adolescent reproductive health as consequences of promiscuity on the part of the affected youths. For instance, when a young girl was found to be pregnant, the immediate reaction of the school authority then was to bring her to the school assembly, disgrace her publicly and then expel her from the school. Thus one of the immediate and challenging tasks of AHI when it came on the scene was how to deal with an adult target, which was not

only unreceptive to sexuality issues but also viewed the discussion of such as taboo, although it was evident that lack of information was wreaking a lot of havoc amongst the youth.

However, the conviction and tenacity of the visionaries transformed this dream into reality with the establishment of the AHI youth centre in January 1992, three years after its inception. The youth centre, which was the first of its kind in Nigeria, has continued to provide young people with adolescent reproductive health and life planning information services, recreational activities and special programmes for school vacation periods. Information activities include lectures, videos, film shows, discussions, students' forum and counselling on various adolescent issues. On the 28th of May 1992, the centre was formally launched alongside the Health and Life Planning Clubs. Today, the youth centre boasts of a membership of over 23,000 young people. One reason for this patronage is that the user-friendly approach adopted by AHI has endeared its programmes to its youth audience. By constantly seeking the opinion of consumers on new directions, the centre continues to improve thereby attracting more youth. Many young people attest to the fact that they can be themselves in the youth centre and not be judged by adults for acts of youthful exuberance. They can relate with understanding adults who treat them with respect and dignity rather than viewing them through bias coloured lenses or placing them in a particular stereotype. It has thus



A young client during a counselling session with the healthcare provider at the AHI Youth Centre.

become a haven for young people seeking a place where they would be accepted, guided and encouraged.

What Makes AHI Tick!

AHI no doubt, is one of the leading, reputable non-governmental organizations working to promote the health and development of adolescents in Nigeria. Many have wondered what makes AHI so different and why it continues to attract such a large number of young people like it does. The reason is not farfetched: right from inception, AHI has consciously sought to incorporate youth perception into its programme design. For instance, young people are in the forefront of AHI's IEC work where, apart from serving as peer educators, they are actively involved in the peer education selection process. The IEC sessions are essentially conducted by them and this has created a friendly and comfortable atmosphere for facility users. These young people are responsible for the production of audio

and video documentaries; they reach out to their peers through various creative means such as singing, dancing, and acting as well as poetry recitations; and they write their own drama scripts and even produce them.

These young people have benefited immensely from participating in AHI's activities as the organisation exposes them to new ideas and development in youth programming by facilitating their participation in conferences, seminars and workshops, where they serve as chairpersons of sessions or as rapporteurs. Apart from this, AHI also regularly seeks feedback from the youth who are its facility users. Thus, young people are involved right from the stage of planning through to the stage of implementation and this explains the reason why it has continued to witness massive leaps in its patronage. The success of the organisation is a proof that involving youth in programme planning, implementation and evaluation enhances the prospects of

successful programming.

Furthermore, the youth centre has a structure that makes it possible for its target audience to obtain information in diverse and interesting ways. Apart from such major attractions as recreational facilities and access to computer training at subsidised rates, the centre has various units, each designed in a unique way to meet the goal of service and information provision for young people.

The Youth Clinic

Every young person wants an atmosphere of acceptance, and the youth clinic provides this. Apart from providing information on reproductive health services, the youth clinic provides young people with guidance, counselling, and a non-judgmental environment, which gives them maximum opportunities for self expression and self discovery. It also assures that the patron's privacy and confidentiality are protected. The provision of clinical services is influenced by the guiding philosophy that young people need to be aware of the various factors at the adolescence stage of their lives and that only adolescents who know themselves, value themselves, are aware of options and are skilled, have the capacity to live responsibly. Thus, AHI seeks to improve adolescent reproductive health by increasing the ability of young people to prevent early pregnancies, reproductive tract infections, Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and other such problems associated with their reproductive health and sexuality. With this objective in mind and with friendly and approachable health providers, it is little wonder that several young people avail themselves of these services on a



daily basis.

Information, Education and Communication Unit

The most popular unit amongst young people in A.H.I. is perhaps the I.E.C. unit. Its activities, which are geared towards effecting changes in attitudes, beliefs, values, norms and behavior among adolescents usually attracts a large turnout of young people. Students, out-of-school youth of both sexes are often found engaged in creative ways such as singing, dancing, poem recitals and acting. Through these creative means, factual information on adolescent reproductive health and general youth development issues are passed across. They thus have their much sought after fun, although in very constructive ways. The I.E.C activities are implemented at various levels like the youth center - based educational activities, school - based outreach activities, the Health and Life Planning Cubs, the annual Teenage Festival of Life, and the various training activities organised by the unit.

Today, hundreds of adolescents have been trained under the IEC Peer Education training programme and

Young people being led by AHI staff marching through the streets of Lagos as part of the activities marking the World AIDS Day Celebration.

Young people are involved right from the stage of planning through to the stage of implementation and this explains the reason why AHI has continued to witness massive leaps in its patronage.

thousand others have been trained as health educators through the Adolescent Reproductive Health Education training. Perhaps, the IEC unit can best be described as a unit, which captures the essence of adolescence - adventurous and fun-loving. The unit recognises that through the provision of information to young people, they can be helped to channel their energies into useful and non-destructive activities. One young person, Oluwaseun Joda describes it best, "I learnt to be myself, to say "No" to destructive behaviour and to remain assertive."

The Participatory Video Communications Unit

Television, films and the Internet are fast becoming the popular media through which young people get information. In Nigeria and indeed throughout the developing world, increasing access to television and videos has enabled the mass media to emerge as one of the most common and popular sources of information about sex and

sexuality for young people. To ensure that they get factual information through these means, AHI has a PVC unit, which has trained several young people in video production skills. Today, the unit has over 60 productions to its credit. Apart from this, the unit engages

young people in its drama troupe, made up of both in-school and out-of-school young people who write drama scripts and act in selected drama. They also act as backup during musicals and other productions that the troupe is involved in. The unit also helps to discover and develop talents in singing and acting during performances by the troupe.

AHI's PVC activities are open to interested adolescents and involvement offers the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills. Operating video production equipment is exciting, while appearing on tape can be tremendously reinforcing and motivating. This helps them communicate their needs and concerns better to people at all levels.

The Library

Someone once said that readers are leaders, and it is this desire to help young people grow into responsible adults who others can look up to that has led to the establishment of the youth centre library. It is also designed to help them make responsible choices, arming them with the appropriate knowledge and information. Equipped with a variety of books on various issues such as Teenage Pregnancy, Abortion, Puberty, Counselling, HIV/AIDS, to mention a few, the library is the only unit in the centre that accommodates both young people and adults. Researchers, lecturers, secondary school teachers, counsellors and health workers have found the materials useful and interesting. These materials can be easily accessed at no cost while those, which are for sale, can also be ordered via mail by those who are unable to visit the library. Young people, who love knowledge, enjoy reading and learning new things will find the library interesting.



Forging Ahead

Despite AHI's numerous achievements, new challenges and opportunities continue to emerge each day. Just like a teenager desiring to take determined steps into adulthood, AHI continues to exploit such opportunities to see its dream of a Nigeria filled with healthy young people fulfilled. Although the statistics have improved and past efforts have yielded laudable results, AHI recognises that each day, someone still dies from unsafe abortion, someone still has an unwanted pregnancy, someone injects hard drugs from an infected needle, and someone contracts HIV. These have been and continue to be the motivating factors for AHI's tenacity over the years. Young

people are said to be leaders of tomorrow, however young people that are not equipped for the challenges of today will end up becoming liabilities tomorrow. Young people that are carried along equipped with information and skills and feel a unique sense of self worth and self esteem will turn out to be assets to the nation. With this fact in mind, AHI continues to be dedicated to the youth: the backbone of the nation, the foundation of Nigeria's future and ultimately, the leaders of tomorrow.



A young person facilitating a sing and screen printing training session at the AHI Youth Centre.

What Community Leaders Say About AHI

Action Health Incorporated has been fantastic and helpful to our community. Over the years, the organisation has helped our community in various ways,



Mrs. Bimpe Giwa, Director of the Inspectorate Department, Lagos State Ministry of Health.

especially the youth. For instance, many of our youth have gone through the vocational skills training facilitated by AHI. This has helped to sustain many of them, who otherwise would have been charlatans or young mothers. The information

provided by AHI to members of our community has also equipped us to manage our relationships better with our young ones."

Chief (Mrs.) C.A. Adebare
Chairperson, Adebare CDA

Since I have been involved in the various programmes put up by AHI, I have been able to gain sufficient information on the challenges confronting adolescents and this has helped me co-ordinate the youths in my community and taught me how to encourage and guide them morally, politically, educationally and socially. I have also observed how AHI's training has enabled them to change in positive ways and they are now more useful to the community. AHI has really been exceptional in influencing our youth in a positive way and this will benefit the nation as a whole because these young people would definitely grow up to be responsible adults."

Chief (Mrs.) C.T. Adebowale
Chairperson, Olayinka CDA

Production of the Growing Up Newsletter

The Growing Up newsletter continued to gain popularity amongst the young people who are its target audience, as demand for the newsletter per quarter increased from an average of 4,466 in 2002 to 4,758 in 2003 and 4,800 in the first two quarters of 2004. Out of this, 4,294 were young people and 172 adults in 2002, 4,546 young people and 212 adults requested for and received a copy of the newsletter in each quarter of 2003 (this includes subscribers, those who collect them by hand at the AHI youth centre and during outreach programmes etc). Overall, a total of about 17,864 people received four editions of the newsletter in 2002 while a total number of 19,032

persons received four editions of the newsletter in 2003. The quarterly newsletter is circulated to young people, teachers, parents and policy makers within AHI's target population and to others outside the state and outside the country.

The growing interest generated by the content of the newsletter has also led to an encouraging increase in the number of people who provide feedback to the editor about the impact of the information acquired and the request to include their friends names on the mailing list. In 2003, a total of 639 mails were received and following pressure from readers to have their comments, requests and responses published, a new column "Letters To

The Editor" was introduced.

Another indicator of the growing popularity of the newsletter was the culling of some excerpts from the newsletters for publication by two national newspapers, the Comet and the Daily Times in 2003. 5000 copies each of the four different editions of the Growing Up newsletter were produced each year. The following were the themes of the some different editions of the newsletter. The first edition of the Growing Up newsletter was published in 1993. Overall, AHI has produced 48 editions.

The newsletter served as a useful resource to young people, most especially those who cannot attend AHI's programmes because of the distance and cost of transportation. The newsletter also proved to be very useful to many who are in boarding schools outside Lagos state. The contents of the newsletter were generated / collated by young people with technical inputs from the editorial team.





Reaching Young People in Northern Nigeria

To complement Action Health Incorporated's (AHI) initial efforts supported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 2000-2001 as part of the Nigerian HIV/AIDS Emergency Action Plan (HEAP) to facilitate the establishment of youth friendly health services in six states with the highest HIV/AIDS sero-prevalence rates in Nigeria, AHI initiated the "Expanded Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Services for Youth in Northern Nigeria Project" in 2002 with support from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

The overall goal of this initiative is to develop interventions that will enable young people have greater access to sexual and reproductive health information and services in Northern Nigeria. The project is designed to utilize the strategies and

related activities of advocacy and social mobilization, capacity building and training, as well as collaboration and networking with partner organizations based in four Northern Nigeria States Kaduna, Nassarawa, Bauchi and Borno.

In each state, two NGOs from two different urban centers were identified and selected as implementing partners for the project, making a total of eight (8) NGOs from eight (8) project communities. The NGOs are also working in collaboration with the Ministry of Health in their respective states

To date, seven of the project communities have identified government referral centers. These centers have allocated space for the adolescent friendly clinic within the hospitals and trained health care providers have been assigned to serve the youth clinics.

In all the eight project communities, interventions are being targeted at both in and out of school young people. In-school youth will be reached through collaboration with the school authorities and parents. Peer education and school health clubs will also be utilized for this purpose. Out of school youth will be accessed through youth groups, religious organizations and other community-based approaches. Advocacy will be targeted at key stakeholders that can support and facilitate project implementation in the project communities.

Promoting Sexual Well-being Across Africa

The Africa Regional Sexuality Resource Centre (ARSRC) is a project of Action Health Incorporated established in 2002, in Lagos Nigeria as one of four sexuality resource centers set-up around the world under a Ford Foundation supported initiative “Global Dialogue on Sexual Health and Well-Being”. The ARSRC’s mission is to contribute to the emergence of a large and increasingly influential community of sexuality professionals; wider adoption and implementation of comprehensive sexuality education programs and productive cross-sectoral partnerships and networking around issues of healthy, responsible and pleasurable sexuality, on the African Continent.

Objectives

- To expand and shape the discourse, thinking and action on sexuality at all levels in the focal countries within Africa
- To nurture and build professional capacity in the emerging field of sexuality
- To build links between kindred organizations and individuals in Africa working on sexuality issues.

Current Thematic Focus Area

- Access of Adolescents to Sexuality Education
- Violence Against Women and Girls
- Re-thinking Masculinities
- Sexuality and Religion
- Sexuality and HIV/AIDS
- Sexuality and the Media

Activities under the initiative focus on four of the most populous countries in Africa:

- Egypt (North Africa)
- Kenya (East Africa)
- Nigeria (West Africa)
- South Africa (Southern Africa)

Activities and Services

- Resource Centre Facilities: Comfortable, pleasant and fully computerized work-friendly resource center facility
- Fully automated physical and electronic library resources. Electronic resources, including databases, may be accessed by stakeholders across the continent and world.

- Website: User-friendly interactive site an information clearing house on sexuality, sexual health and rights issues in Africa. www.arsrc.org.
- Sexuality in Africa magazine: A quarterly publication that mirrors current / contemporary issues and debates in the areas of sexuality, sexual health and rights in Africa.
- Annual Sexuality Leadership Development Fellowships (SLDF): Brings together for three weeks in Lagos Nigeria, promising young African professionals drawn from the countries of focus.
- Annual Summer Sexuality Institute: for middle and senior level professionals working in Sexuality and allied fields
- Customized workshop/seminars: To build capacity of sexuality professionals from countries of focus



The 2004 ARSRC Sexuality Leadership Development Fellows pose for a group photograph.

Partner Institutions

- International Islamic Centre for Population Studies and Research, Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt
- Kenya Association of Professional Counsellors, Nairobi, Kenya
- Department of Community Health, College of Medicine, University of Lagos, Nigeria
- Health Systems Trust, Johannesburg, South Africa

Building Capacity for Sexuality Education in Nigeria



Promoting access to information and services to mitigate negative health outcomes for young people has been one of the primary strategies adopted by AHI since inception. This is also in line with recommendations made in the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action of 1994, which stipulates that “support should be given to integrate sexuality education and services for young people...”

With almost fifteen years experience of adolescent sexual and reproductive health programming, AHI began to provide technical assistance to other organizations, including the training of sexuality educators across Nigeria. Some of such training activities include:

- The two weeks national training of master trainers on sexuality education for 46 Federal Ministry of Education Officers from the six geo-political zones of the country, from 15th- 26th April, 2002.

- The training of over 127 State Master Trainers of the UNFPA-supported POP/FLE programme in 15 focal states across the country.

- Training of about 400 secondary school teachers from 200 schools in Lagos State public schools in sexuality education.

- Training of 32 sexuality educators from 7 states supported by the MacArthur Foundation.

- Training of 40 teachers and 115 peer educators (students) from the South-west and South-south Federal Unity Schools across the country.

The training programmes aimed at enhancing the capacity of individuals and organizations to implement the Sexuality Education curriculum.

Training session facilitated by AHI Programme Officer, Ms. Chieme Ndukwe.

Poems



AHI

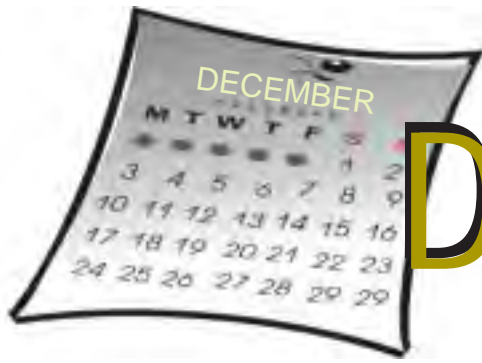
Like an eternal progression
Of people passing through our lives
A continuing stream of people with us
Bring us a gift
A blessing, a lesson to learn
You know,
Nothing just stops and stays
It flows on like a river
AHI! AHI!!! AHI!!!!
Flowing through our lives Gliding, touching, teaching
And then we realize
Action Health Incorporated
Aren't thee like a tree?
Planted by the riverside
Bearing forth good fruits
Like a beacon on the hill
Giving light to those who care to see
- Moyin Jolayemi, Lagos

I Will Make It

Sometimes I feel powerless and defeated
When all around me seems too far to be touched, Too
hard to handle
And too big to conquer.
But my spirit tells me
You have to press on,
Behind the rain is sunshine
A new dawn is here
Your skies are still blue
You can make it through
You've got the strength.
Now I've found hope
I can swim no matter how deep
Through the ocean of defeat
I'll fight the battle
I can stand the test of time
Holding on to my watch word
'I will make it'.
- Balogun Ololade, Lagos

Youth Adult Partnership

Show me an understanding and supportive mother
And I will show you a qualitative daughter
Full of life's skills, called mother's pride
Show me a courageous and hardworking father
And I will point out a strong and striving boy
Committed parents yield competent adolescents
Lack of parent - child communication
Breeds misinformed and unequipped adolescents
They fall apart, leading to disunity and uncertainties
It's high time we talked this over
Adults, parents make us your partners
Now can we really talk about it?
Talk about what? Sexuality Education
- Esokawu. O.Maureen, Lagos



Dear Diary

Monday

The incident was rape! My friends and I could not stop imagining how such an elderly man could stoop so low as to rape a young girl. The incident was so touching that we spoke and argued about it throughout our journey back to school and even late into the night before we went to bed.

Mum came to pick me up late in the afternoon because we were through with our final exams. I was happy to see her, but sad because I would be missing my friends. As I hadn't finished packing, she had to wait for a while before we left for home.

Tuesday

I was so happy to meet everyone at home. My dad was extremely happy to see me, and we had a father-to-daughter discussion on the happenings both at school and at home. While we were at it, I felt like telling him about the rape incident and ask how he would feel if an elderly man were to rape his own daughter.

I eventually summoned up courage and told him about it. We actually ended up discussing the issue in a relaxed atmosphere. I learnt from him that it was possible in some cases but such

cases could be better handled and even avoided if the assaulted person reported the incident to a counsellor, a trusted adult or to her pastor/imam.

Wednesday

My younger brother came to my room and he shared with me all that happened at home while I was at school; we laughed and gisted for a long while. Later in the day, I went to the market to get some foodstuff for the house. I came back tired and decided to have my siesta.

Thursday

I went to visit my uncle and aunt, since I hadn't seen them in a long time. They were happy to see me and we all went to an eatery to have lunch. When I was leaving for home my uncle gave me N2,000.00 for transportation. I was very happy to get that tidy sum, because I hadn't received any money since I got back from school.

Friday

Mum was too tired to make breakfast, so I decided to help out. I made rice, plantain and stew. After breakfast, I sat in the sitting room to watch some films. As I

was going through all the films on the rack, I saw one that caught my attention and which interested me so I decided to slot it in and watch. The film was quite interesting and very educative, although it had a sad ending.

Saturday

I spent today washing my parents' clothes. After washing, I was so weak and tired that I had to take some medication to pep me up.

Sunday

Today is Seunfunmi, my younger brother's birthday so I decided to take a stroll down the street to the supermarket round the corner, to get something nice for him. At the shop, just as I was about paying for the gift I chose, somebody slipped a note into my palm. As I looked up to see who it was, a smiling face was beaming right into mine and I opened the little note. To my surprise, the note says...

I'll tell you in the next edition!

National youth forum on HIV/AIDS held in Abuja



Young people visiting AHI's exhibition stand during the forum.

The National Youth Forum on HIV/AIDS was the first of its kind in Nigeria. The event, which took place from the 28th of November to The 1st of December, drew over 250 young people from the 36 states of the federation including the FCT. AHI sponsored three of its youths- Ifeanyi Esokawu, Abiola Jolaosho and Feyi Fowowe to the event, which took place at the

Ladi Kwali conference centre of the Sheraton Hotel and Towers, Abuja. The forum, which was a follow-up to the Youth Consultative meeting sought to consolidate strategies for the formation of a National Youth Network on HIV/AIDS which will co-ordinate youth related HIV/AIDS activities, present youth in major decision-making processes and most importantly, work to promote the position of young people in the on-going National HIV/AIDS Strategy Review Process.

During the three-day event, young people were taken through life

skills to help young people build special competencies required to deal with specific situations especially in terms of reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. The sessions therefore highlighted such skills as values and values clarification, decision-making, self-esteem, assertiveness, negotiation and refusal skills. One of the highlights of the event was the World AIDS Day celebration on December 1. To commemorate the event, the young people participated in a rally which was conducted at the Eagles square, and graced by the President and Vice president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

At the end of the event, a National Youth Network on HIV/AIDS comprising 37 young people from the 36 states of Nigeria and the FCT was launched. Also, a strategic five-year national plan of action was developed and adopted.

Vocational skills workshop for youths



Young people taking part in the art of beading.

In keeping with the tradition of equipping young people with skills for positive development, AHI organised a vocational skills workshop for young people. This tie and dye exercise took place on

September 14, 2004. Mr. Lawal Idris the resource person talked about the different types of tie and dye and also highlighted the need to use gloves and avoid getting the chemicals too close to the nose. The young people were divided into groups to tie various clothes which they had brought along. They were taught different styles of tying and the mixtures of components for effective dying. He listed the materials to be used to include: dye,

a piece of cloth, Salt, Soda, Warm water, Gloves, Raffia/Baby wool.

The Skills acquisition workshop also enabled them to identify opportunities and prospects available in the art of beading. Miss Sola Adeniyi of Hephzy B taught the participants the various uses of beads. At the end of these exercises they were able to acquire new skills such as belt-making, hair clips, bags, earrings and neck laces.

In attendance were 47 young people. 20 males and 27 females and at the end of the exercise, the young people thanked the organization for giving them the opportunity to be part of the workshop.

Outreach by Ideal Brothers League



A group photograph of members of Ideal Brothers League and the resource persons during the HIV/AIDS Awareness Campaign.

As a way of reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS in Akoka community in particular and Lagos State in general, the Ideal Brothers League (a community based youth group) put together an HIV/AIDS awareness campaign to mark the annual celebration of Great February 18 Hall. The event which took place at the Federal College of Education, Akoka (F.C.E.) witnessed a large turn out.

According to the President of the League, Idealist Ahmed Oni, "We decided to embark on this project in order to prevent our community from being ravaged by this scourge". He adds "as leaders of tomorrow, everything must be done

Art and essay competition for students

The Bloom Cancer Care and Support center organized an Art/Essay competition among secondary school students as part of the activities to mark Breast Cancer Awareness month (BCAM) in October, 2004.

This programme is organized in collaboration with Action Health Incorporated and it is aimed at

public lecture titled, "Tips for Job-Hunting - Skills Acquisition for Gainful Employment" was delivered by Miss Bunmi Adeniyi of Action Health Incorporated. She counselled the students on job-hunting and how to successfully apply for a job. Mr. Lanre Kayode of Society for Family Health (SFH) who was one of the Resource persons spoke on "Giving HIV/AIDS a Human Face". He cautioned against unprotected sex insisting on the use of condoms for those who cannot abstain.

In attendance were representatives of other NGOs, students of F.C.E Akoka and some out of school young people.

creating an awareness of Cancer amongst school children.

The topic for the Essay Competition was "Breast Cancer is preventable" while the Art Competition had two topics namely, "Celebrating Life" and "Keeping our Environment". At the end of the Art Competition, Adebayo Motunrayo of Reagan Memorial

to see that your future is not jeopardized".

The high point of the two-day seminar was the distribution of leaflets on HIV/AIDS as well as condoms, to the students. Earlier, a

Refresher course for peer educators

As part of efforts to increase the knowledge of the peer educators, a two-day seminar was organized on September 1st to 2nd, 2004. Those in attendance were peer educators who had graduated over the years.

The refresher course aimed at refreshing the knowledge of young people about sexuality education and increasing their skills in communicating with their peers and dealing with challenges of growing up. The facilitators were drawn from AHI.

Some of the issues treated centered on puberty, values, value clarification, communication and early pregnancy and unsafe abortion.



Baptist Girls High School, Yaba came first while Balogun Morenike Oluwasayo of the same school came second.

In the Essay Competition, Ogbogu Precious of Comprehensive Senior High School, Alapere, Ketu, Lagos came first while Ugbara Okeoghene Edit came second. Various prizes were awarded to the winners.



Teenage Festival of Life 2004

Excitement was in the air that sunny Thursday morning. Hundreds of students lined up in rows to get into the main auditorium of the University of Lagos, while many others could be seen chatting excitedly in anticipation of the day's events. Car horns honked as teachers, administrators, private bodies and government officials searched for parking spaces, eager not to miss any part of the activities lined up for the event. Even nature seemed to be in agreement with the crowd's excitement as the sun shone brightly in the sky.

This was the mood at this year's Teenage Festival of Life. Known for its reputation of pulling large crowds of students from secondary schools across Lagos State. The Teenage Festival of Life has established its place in the hearts of students as an event not only to celebrate their talents and

achievements, but also to celebrate the joy of adolescence. It is a festival that unifies students from different secondary schools, both private and public. Although the Festival comes in form of a competition through debate, poetry recitals, songs rendition and drama, it ironically fosters partnership and co-operation amongst the competing schools as they each have only one goal in mind: to prove that young people can achieve outstanding results if only they are given the opportunities to discover their talents and express themselves. This was the crux of this year's TFL with the theme "Sexuality Education: Equipping young People for Responsible Living". Young people took to the stage to showcase their talents and do justice to the theme. This year's event showcased the best talents in drama, songs and poetry, from over 43 secondary schools in

Somolu, Kosofe and Mainland Local Education Districts in Lagos State. This is where AHI operates its school-based youth development programmes. The objectives of this year's festival included amongst other things to create positive values in young people and contribute to youth efficiency and responsible living, leading to general well-being of the youth and the society at large, and also to provide opportunity for young people to apply practical knowledge and expertise in solving problems/challenges faced by youths in the larger society. The festival served two major functions among other things: as a medium for educating young people on the challenges of growing up and also to showcase skills and knowledge gained on reproductive health throughout the year to adult audiences. The festival focused on the development of creative competence



in young people using artistic expression as the area of emphasis. Such artistic expressions include acting, music, dance, writing, verbal communication and all of which AHI has explored on past TFL events. These artistic expressions are used as the platform for young people's performances in the song and festival because AHI recognizes that participating in the drama, song and poetry competitions provide opportunities for young people to develop and demonstrate their creative competency as well as raise the society's consciousness about the issues that affect their lives. It also gives them the opportunity to portray a positive self-image of themselves and express their feelings in a positive, creative and constructive manner.

As is the culture of the past TFL events, a TFL planning committee, comprising young people and experienced adults was set up in January to deliberate on the events of the festival. This core group of people

came up with suggestions for the theme and various other aspects of the events via the quarterly newsletter, posters and verbal communication, to get schools to participate in earnest for the event. As part of preparations for the event, a training workshop was organized to enlighten participating schools on the theme and regulations of the festival. The one-day workshop was facilitated by Ms. Bunmi Oyinsan of Cultural Action Network (CULAN), who drew the guidelines for writing and staging drama, songs and poetry. Young people were enlightened on various literary terms which they needed to be familiar with before proceeding to develop their scripts. They were also taken through the various sources of inspiration for developing their plots which included dreams, songs, books, life experiences, history and events. After the training workshop, 35 schools responded to the call for submission of entries. These included 27 drama entries, 17 song entries





Teachers being honoured during the festival.

and 13 poetry entries. As usual, short listing the entries wasn't an easy task as the selection process was a very tedious one. To ensure fairness, different professionals from such organizations as the Women's Writers of Nigeria, and Nigerian Authors Association were called upon to judge the scripts. Different criteria such as plot, characterization, theme realization, structure, setting, diction and title were used as entries for selecting the best entries. The objective was to ensure that only the very best of activities were showcased on the day of the festival and this they achieved as both the youth and adult audiences applauded excitedly at the end of each performance. The schools, which emerged winners in the various categories, made their presentations as scheduled. Three presentations were made in each category. In the drama category, Lagos City Senior College emerged the winner with their drama titled "The Lost Sheep". Other presentations in this category include "Had I known" by Ojota Senior High School, and "Never Too Late" by

Comprehensive Senior High School. In the songs category, Igbobi College thrilled the crowd with their scintillating voices as they rendered the song "Stop Sexual Abuse to make a better future". Similarly, performances were done by Comprehensive Senior High School and Ikosi Senior High School who emerged 2nd and 3rd respectively with their songs titled "Show me the Way" and "Sexuality Education". Ajayi Cowther memorial senior high school emerged 1st in the poetry category with their poem titled "Ignorance"; followed closely by Apostolic Church Grammar School with their poem titled "Let me be". To add glamour to the event, there were musical performances by The Covenant Brothers, Black Image and Rasqie, a popular musician who thrilled the young people with his dance steps and contemporary songs. Popular TV presenter, Dayo Adeneye was the MC for the event, while a number of young people were on hand as comperes to ensure the smooth running of the event.

The event was graced by various dignitaries including Hon Dr. S.B. Adejare who represented the Honourable Speaker of the Lagos State House of Assembly. The guests were taken through a documentary of past TFL celebrations which highlighted the processes through which

the event has developed over the years. Another highlight of the year's event was the presentation of certificates to teachers who had been trained on Sexuality Education by AHI in collaboration with the Lagos State Ministry of Education. The presentation was done by Mrs. Adebimpe Giwa, representative of the Permanent Secretary, Lagos State Ministry of Education.

At the end of the festival, many young people attested to its success and lessons they have learnt through their participation. For some who were attending for the first time, it was an eye opener to the numerous potentials they had as young people. To others, it was a re-enforcement of their faith in their abilities as young people to use their energy in positive ways. Many others were challenged and vowed to participate actively in the next TFL rather than just watch their peers perform. Thus, there is little doubt that next year's TFL will be even more competitive and eye opening than this year's. Many are already looking forward to 2005.

A low-down on the basic secrets of success with schoolwork

An "A" is for "Attitude"

So now you're asking.... "What does my attitude have to do with this?"

An "A" + Attitude

Ever heard of a "self-fulfilling prophecy"? Basically, it means that if you think you can do something, you probably can or, if you think you can't, you probably can't.

We all have ideas about ourselves- things like "I'm not good at math" or "I'm a 'C' student". Too often, these ideas hold us back from stretching ourselves, whether we realize it or not.

Don't defeat yourself before you start by believing you'll fail. Remember, attitudes tend to create reality. What's yours?

Goal 101

Why are goals so important? Well, you have to know why you're putting in all this work, and where you're going or at least in what general direction. As baseball great Yogi Berra once said, if you don't know where you're going, you might not get there (Hmmm...)

Long-term goals are important, but so are weekly and daily ones. Write them down! There's something energizing about seeing them in ink (besides the guilt you'll feel like looking at them if you're not working toward them...).

Hints: First, don't set too many goals, else you'll just get discouraged. Second, break down

your goals into small steps. Remember, when Alexander the Great set out to conquer the world, he had to fight one battle at a time.

Think Team

Get others on your side, like:

- Parents: Let them know what you're up to now, and talk about your future plans, too. Ask them how they set goals, decided what to do after high school, survived exams..
- Friends: Try forming a pre-test study group or working with a "study buddy."
- Teachers: Ask for extra help or review materials if you need them. Teachers are usually more than happy to help students who care about doing well.
- Homework Bound

Do you ever wonder... "I put in the time, so why don't I seem to get anywhere when I study?"

Know Thyself

Everyone learns and studies differently. A few things you'll need to figure out:

- When do you study best? Are you most alert early in the morning (ha!), right after school, or later in the evening?
- Are you most productive if you tackle the hardest stuff first, or do you prefer warming up with easier tasks?
- What motivates you to keep at it? Try tracking your grades, getting a friend to keep you on task, or

rewarding yourself when you finish something on your "to do" list.

The Set-Up

What makes a good study area?

1. Peace and quiet. Background music works for some, but others find it distracting,
2. Good lighting. Give your eyes a break.
3. A moderate temperature. Too warm will make you drowsy; too cold is just miserable.
4. A comfortable chair. Good back support is important
5. A clean workspace. Don't let a paper clutter take over your desk.
6. The necessary tools. Have the basics handy: pens, pencils, a calculator, a dictionary, scrap paper, and your agenda.
7. That homey touch. You might like to have a few snapshots of the loved ones you can't see because you're slaving away at your studies.

Don't forget that your school or public library can be a great study space.

Your Game Plan

Before you start, plan out what you'll do and how much time you'll spend on each task. Jot down a study schedule (and include a few breaks).

Adapted from the Franklin Covey's Series.

Studying with Style

What kind of learner are you?

Everyone uses all three main learning styles, but depends most on one or two.

Someone gives you a phone number, but you don't have a pen handy. How will you remember it?

- Repeat it out loud.
- Try to picture it in your hand
- "Write" it with your finger on your hand or some other surface.
- Develop a complex mathematical formula involving the digits of the phone number, trigonometric ratios, the speed of light, and the ionic charges of plutonium.

If you picked (a), you're probably a mainly auditory learner. You remember stories better if you hear them than if you read them; can follow spoken instructions better than written ones; and say every word in your head as you read silently.

Try...

- Reading aloud.
- Listing the steps of a task out loud.
- Repeating important points or new words out loud.
- Learning from lectures and tapes.
- Discussing concepts with others.

If you picked (b), you're a mainly visual learner. You learn best from reading, and can read quickly; like to see things written out; and picture words or diagrams in your head to remember them.

Try...

- Taking notes during lectures.
- Watching the speaker to stay focused.
- Drawing out diagrams, charts, or tables.
- Organizing, rewriting, or color-

coding notes.

- Visualizing words or facts to be memorized.

If you picked (c), you're a mainly tactile/kinesthetic learner. You enjoy hands-on learning, including experiments, models, and role plays; you're good at puzzles and mazes; and you can often put things together without instructions.

Try...

- Memorizing or drilling while pacing or exercising.
- Making lists or writing things out several times.
- Using computers and hands-on study aids.
- Learning by doing and practicing, or by role-playing.
- Tracing words to be learned.

If you picked (d), it's our guess that you've already figured out how to study quite effectively.

Adjusting your antennae

Does this sound like you...?

"You know the phrase "in one ear and out the other? That's what happens to me in class. Nothing sticks."

Unless you're telepathic, you'll pick up most of your information by listening and reading. So how can you be an active listener and reader?

The ears have it

"Hearing" happens; "listening" takes a bit more work. The key is to use your ears and mind at the same time (kind of like patting your head and rubbing your stomach simultaneously).

1. Watch the speaker (when you're not writing)
2. Concentrate. Try to ignore distractions (unless they involve

flames, loud alarms etc.)

3. Ask questions and get involved (when appropriate)

4. Think about how a new material connects to what you already know

5. Be suspicious (or at least be a critical thinker). Does what you're hearing make sense? Is it fact or opinion? What do you know that proves or disproves it? Challenge something if you're not convinced. (How do they know the earth is round? ...)

6. Take notes on the main ideas. Use your own words. Spend about 80% of your time listening, and about 20% of it writing.

Your life an open book?

For textbook reading, try the SQ4R method:

- Survey the material. Scan it. Read the headings and check out the length of each section. This will set up your brain to process what you read.
- Question your self. What will you be learning? What do you already know about this? Will you be reading for main ideas or for all the details?
- Read, section by section. At the end of each section:
 - Reflect. Stop and think about what you've just read. What were the most important points? Did it make sense to you? Can you think of examples or connections with what you knew before?
 - Record the main points in your own words. Summarize them as briefly as you can. Also write down any questions you still have.
 - Recall/Review the main ideas. Say them aloud or in your head. Again, use your own words.

Adapted from the Franklin Covey's Series.

Career Preparation

Thinking about career planning?... Think about your community!

Your community is one of your best resources for information on careers, finances, etc. See your academic advisor or counsellor. Get informed!

Success doesn't happen by itself. Make a plan! Chart your course! The sooner you start, the sooner you will begin to achieve your goals. Here are some tips on reaching your destination. *Enjoy the trip!*

Steps to take:

1. Assess Yourself: Employers are looking for certain skills and attitude. Think about it:

- What interests and skills have you developed?
- What do you like best: working with people, things, or ideas?
- What goals and values have you set for yourself?

2. Explore Possibilities: Interested in a few careers? Check them out:

- Search the Web.
- Check them out first hand by volunteering or working part-time.
- Get to know what they are all about through talking to people in a specific field, observing them at work, or visiting professional meetings.
- Find out about internships, vacation jobs, and other options.

Tip: Don't base important decisions on only one experience. Give everything a fair trial, and keep your options open.

3. Inform Yourself: Investigate a variety of career paths.

- What qualifications are required?
- Is there room for personal and professional growth?
- Are there jobs open now?
- What's the projected growth?
- What are the working conditions?

Tip: The more knowledge you have about a chosen career, the better your decision will be.

4. Prepare Yourself: Get ready. Prepare your job-hunting tools.

- Create a resume and cover letter.
- Contact people for references.
- Investigate companies that interest you (check the library).

5. Present Yourself: Make yourself stand out!

- Prepare a great resume.
- Create a cover letter for each company.
- Go online to view: www.discoverzone.com/careers for interview and other tips.

Tips for job hunting: skills acquisition for gainful employment

Many school leavers endeavour to make the best impression when applying for jobs, but only few actually do what is desirable. Some have attended several job interviews without success without realizing that there are skills that could enhance one's performance at such interviews.

Hunting for a job

1. Consider all the job sources. These include:

- Suggestions from friends or relatives.
- Read through adverts in the newspapers.
- Visit the state or federal civil service commission and obtain a form and a civil service handbook, which provides a list of the different ministries and parastatals and the available positions and required qualifications.

2. A job seeker should be observant. Obtain information through internet services on the PC

Applying for a job

When composing an application letter, filling an application form and preparing a curriculum vitae, effective communication skills are important as these can make you to stand out from others.

Preparing for an interview

If invited for an interview, you need to prepare adequately:

- Find out about the job and what it entails i.e. what the applicant's duties will be, who is the person you will be working with etc).
- Think about why you are applying for the job and what you have to offer.
- Prepare for the written test.
- Dress neatly and appropriately.
- Arrive on time (about an hour before time).
- Maintain eye contact with the interviewer.
- Speak audibly, clearly and confidently.

(a) When doing a test, the interviewee should:

- Remember that speed and accuracy are most important.
- Practice aptitude test, using resources like "GMAT".
- Be abreast of local and international news before attending the interview.
- Carry along important documents such as original and photocopies of relevant credentials, birth certificates etc.

(b) Oral Interviews

- Don't show your nervousness.
- Be enthusiastic.
- Avoid wrong body language.

Conclusion

Search for a job that will give you job satisfaction. This requires identifying your career interest. You should select a job you will enjoy doing. If you work in a field that is not self-fulfilling, you are not likely to succeed or be happy regardless of the compensation levels.

Adapted from the Franklin Covey's Series.

Rights of a Child

Protection for Children in Circumstances that are Especially Difficult

Children in circumstances that are especially difficult deserve special care to reduce the life threatening stress in their lives and help them adjust to normal and decent life. Children in such circumstances may have been separated from their parents due to poverty or may have become refugees due to civil strife or war.

What does this mean?

Children who have been rendered homeless and parentless because of war or impoverished living conditions are in especially difficult circumstances. It is difficult to imagine what it must be like to be forced out of your own home, to leave everything you own behind, and run away. But think about these terrible truths:

- Over 12 million children have been left homeless due to war during the decade of the 1990's.
- Another one million children have been separated from their parents because of poverty or war.
- About 30 million children live on the streets of the world.

Children who live in unsanitary conditions are subject to various infections which undermine their health, growth and their capacity to learn. Also, the number of child soldiers is increasing throughout the world. Children may be kidnapped or bought in slave markets and then

taught to hold guns and shoot. Many times they are forced to take drugs to make them easier to control and more obedient.

Millions of young girls, some even as young as 10 years, are sold into prostitution by their families. For some girls, it is either they submit to all kinds of brutality or die.

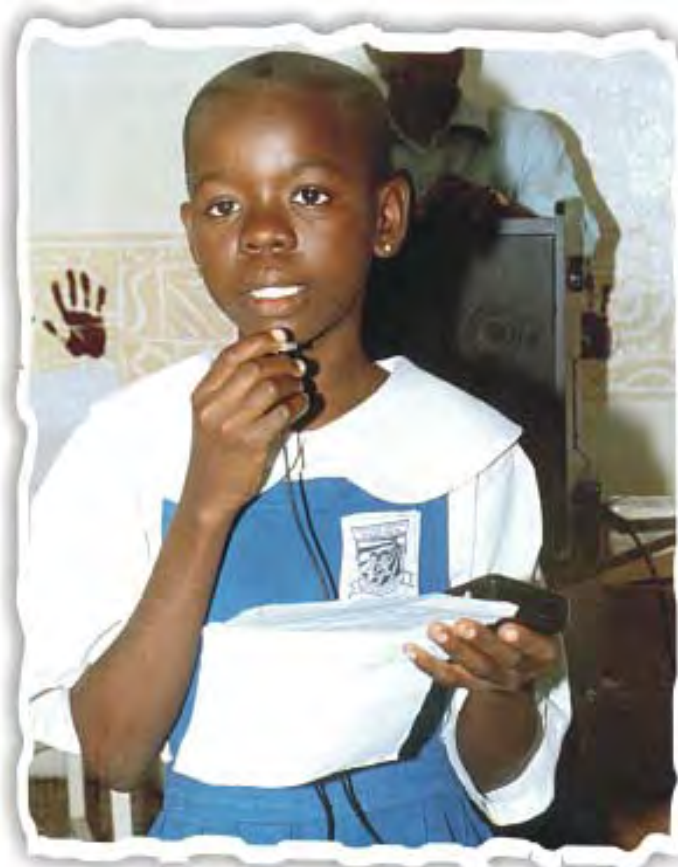
Message to government

On children separated from their parents.

Establish services to resettle parentless children or those temporarily or permanently separated from their family environment.

On cases of mothers who are imprisoned

- Provide special facilities for children of imprisoned mothers (i.e. expectant or nursing mothers). Also needing attention are those mothers who are standing trial or have been sentenced. Special facilities are also needed for the proper care of their children.
- Provide adequate facilities for the children of imprisoned mothers.
- A mother needs re-integration to the family environment on completion of her term of imprisonment.



On refugee children in armed or political crises

- Avoid recruiting under aged (children less than 15 years of age) in the armed forces or using them in armed conflict.
- Work to re-unite children separated from their families through political problems like armed conflicts.
- Protect children permanently or temporarily displaced by armed conflict, civil strife or social disorder in accordance with various UN instruments.
- Cooperate with international agencies to provide assistance for refugee children for their resettlement or re-unification with their families.

Responsibilities of the child

Every child shall have responsibilities towards his family and society, the Nigerian State and other legally recognized communities nationally and internationally.

Subject to his age and ability, such other limitations as may be contained

in this and any other law, the child shall have the duty to :

1. Work for the cohesion of his family
2. Respect his parents, superiors and elders at all times and assist them in case of need.
3. Serve Nigeria by placing his physical and intellectual abilities at its service.
4. Contribute to the moral well-being of the society.
5. Preserve and strengthen social and national solidarity.
6. Preserve and strengthen the independence, and integrity of Nigeria.
7. Respect the ideals of freedom, equality, humanness and justice for all persons.
8. Preserve and strengthen the Nigerian, African and human cultural values in his relations with other members of the society, in the spirit of tolerance, dialogue and unity.
9. Contribute to the best of his abilities at all times and at all levels, to the solidarity of the African people and the human race.

Message to government

- Establish services to resettle orphaned/parentless children, or those who have been separated from their parents.
- Provide shelters and educational opportunities for street children and try to integrate them back into their families.
- Legislate against the recruitment of children under the age of 18 into the military.
- Re-unit refugee children with their families

Discussion

- What are some of the reasons children leave their homes and move

Fact Box

the bad news



In Mozambique, between 1981 and 1988, 454,000 children died because of war.



There will be an estimated 200million children living on the streets by the year 2000 (worldwide).



In Africa, civil strife and war are creating refugee problems in over 10 countries.

the good news



1000 organizations in 60 countries signed an international treaty to ban landmines.



The International Labour Organisation is urging governments to pass laws to prohibit companies from hiring children below the age of 15.



In 1999, Operation Sting raided the homes of 100 suspected child abusers in 12 countries in Europe and confiscated 100,000 pornographic pictures of children.

into the street?

- What social services does government provide for homeless children?

Message to parents

- Work for the protection of child rights.
- Provide a basic living for your family, so no one has to move out of the household to survive.
- Ensure that both boys and girls are educated to know their rights.

Discussion

Do you know of any children in especially difficult circumstances?
Is anyone doing anything to help them?

Question for discussion

Two million children have met violent deaths in the last decade. Another four million have ended up maimed (a

permanent injury) blinded or brain - damaged from landmines from civil strife. What can be done to ease this terrible toll on the world's youngest citizens?

Reference

These materials are being serialized from "Nigeria and the Convention on the Rights of the Child: A workbook for Nigerian Junior Secondary School Students. UNICEF Country Office 2000.

The Day Everything Went Wrong

I must say that this was a day my world was turned upside down. Everything I did was trailed by some bad luck. From morning till the end of the day, I experienced one ugly shock or the other. I would say it was my fault really; I misused my weekend and I ended up paying dearly for it. I had stayed up very late on Sunday night conversing and generally making noise with my friends and dorm mates and I went to bed very late.

Naturally, I woke up late the following morning, a Monday; actually later than usual and I felt a bit uneasy. I did not know the reason but I got very irritable. The people around me just seemed to get on my nerves. I checked my wristwatch, only to discover that it was almost time to leave the dormitory. As I was already running late, I quickly scampered out of bed and dashed to the bathroom. When the house prefect saw me, she was angry and complained loudly. Of course, I was punished. When she released me, I angrily stormed out of the bathroom and quickly dressed up but before I could get through that also, the matron arrived to lock up the dormitory. She too was mad at me and would not listen to me no matter how hard I tried to explain the situation to her. She rather took down my name for yet another set of punishment and ordered me out of the dormitory.

Instead of going straight to the dining room for my breakfast, which was compulsory, I rushed down to the classroom to see what I could get done there. It was in the class that I realised that I had not done some of my assignments. While pondering how to solve this problem, the prefect on duty came in and asked why I was not in the dining hall. Out of frustration I barked a reply to her to the effect that I was not in the mood for her probing questions and asked her to leave me alone. Truly, I did not know when I

said it but it was too late to hold back the words. She gave me a slap, took down my name and promised to report me to the principal after the morning assembly.

Ten minutes after she had left, I heard the bell summoning us for the morning assembly. Because I wasn't through with my assignment yet, I decided not to go for the assembly. I

I would say it was my fault really; I misused my weekend and I ended up paying dearly for it.

was still working on them when the principal came to the classroom area to look for assembly truants; she caught me in the class with other girls. She gathered all of us together, and got us to kneel down. We all begged her and gave her explanations. She was about being placated by our pleas when I again put my foot in it. "Please ma", I said "we won't do it again". She turned and looked at me and her face clouded "you!" she bellowed. "You are always in every bad group and you are very naughty". I was taken aback and then I remembered that she had given me some punishments before. She continued "if I would release anyone at all, I certainly will not release you". With that, she got me in for a special punishment. I was to cut grass for a good part of the day. I felt like the whole world had crashed on me and was at the point of crying when she asked me to get up. I went to my classroom to pack my things and go for the punishment.

It was while I was still on the punishment that I remembered our biology oral quiz test. I quickly ran to the biology laboratory, only to find that I had missed my turn. The biology master was angry with me and I was very jittery. Mistakenly, I pushed one of the equipment on a friend's foot and in a reflex action she struck me and I returned the strike. It nearly resulted into a big fight, but the teacher restrained us. He punished me and suspended me from his class for a week. I felt very angry and with tears in my eyes, I ran out of the laboratory.

As I walked up to my class, I began to hallucinate. I imagined some wild dogs chasing me and I began to run. I ran quickly to the admin block, towards the principal's office, she was just coming out of her office and I was trying to run in. I bumped into her and she let out a surprised cry. I fell down but I was conscious. The hallucination had stopped; she looked at me questioningly and then had me taken to the dispensary. I stayed there for some time before going to the classroom. The mathematics teacher had just given a test and was leaving when I got there. I followed him to the staff room, but even after all my begging and excuses, he refused to listen to me. He sent me out of the staff room and warned me not to return.

At a point, I began to feel that it was something worse than bad luck, I felt cursed. I dragged myself to my place of punishment but I nearly fell down and lost consciousness. I felt weak all over, but I managed to hold myself.

While reflecting on the events of the horrible day, I prayed to God for better days and situations. I promised myself never to have a repeat of such a horrible day again; especially as I knew that I could have prevented what led to it in the first place.



Dear Aunty

Dear Readers, the "Dear Aunty" column treats questions young people ask about their reproductive and sexual health concerns. You too can write in and let us know what your concerns are. You are assured of confidentiality, as your real names will not be published. Send your questions to: The Editor, Growing Up Newsletter (Dear Aunty Column), Action Health Incorporated, 17 Lawal Street, Off Oweh Street, Jibowu, P.O. Box 803, Sabo, Yaba, Lagos.

Wet Dreams

Q How can one prevent having frequent wet dreams?

A A wet dream is an involuntary and unconscious discharge of semen when one is asleep. It is nature's way of getting rid of excess semen, and it is an indication that the person experiencing it is growing into a man.

There is no harm in wet dreams, though our people link it to having sex with a spiritual wife but scientifically, there is no harm in it. The pool of the sperm cannot be completely exhausted as a result of frequent wet dreams. The frequency cannot be controlled because it happens when one is asleep.

Parents and First Menstruation

Q Is it compulsory for a girl not to inform her parents about the reaching of menarche?

A There is no rule that says one must inform one's parents when one experiences the first menstruation, but the young person would need money to buy things that she would need to keep her body clean when menstruating, so it is ideal for her to tell her parents about it so that she can be given the money needed. Apart from the above reason, menstruation is an important 'landmark' of growth and developmental milestones of a female

being. The commencement of menstruation signifies that the young girl is now a woman and she has reached a period of reproductive capability.

Many young people are naïve about it, and it is only when the parents are informed that the young girl can be provided with the right information on personal hygiene, menstrual hygiene and ways of preventing unwanted pregnancy, etc.

Menstrual Pains

Q What do you do to relieve menstrual pains?

A Try any of the following:

- Accept that it is a normal thing and it's just for a few days
- Study and keep record of your menstrual cycle so that you can differentiate the menstrual pain from other causes.
- Try the use of hot water bottle on the lower abdomen or use hot water to compress with towel.
- Do mild pelvic exercises to reduce or relieve the pain
- Mild analgesics like paracetamol, indocid or feldene can also be used but it must not be taken on an empty stomach; it must be taken after or with meals.

Q

Abstinence

Is it normal for a girl of my age (17 yrs) not to have had sexual intercourse and is it true that I am not yet a lady because of that?

A

You are normal, you are practicing abstinence and this is the safest method. You will have no fear of contracting any sexually transmitted infection or unwanted pregnancy as an adolescent. You are also free from all the consequences attached to these like social stigma, abortion and its risks, dropping out of school, shattered future hopes and dreams, infertility, which could be as a result of an untreated STI.

A girl is said to have become a lady when she has passed through the pubertal stage, when some changes occur in her body, like the development of breasts, broadening of the hips, growth of pubic and the armpit hair etc. all these changes make her look different in shape. Therefore sexual intercourse is not what makes a girl a lady.

If you need one-on-one information on these or any other health issues, contact: The Health Services Unit, Action Health Incorporated, 17 Lawal Street, Off Oweh Street, Jibowu, Lagos. Tel.: 01-7743745

Do You Want to be a Musician?

Musicians play musical instruments, sing, compose, teach, and conduct instrumental and vocal performances. They may perform alone or as part of an orchestra, chamber group, ensemble, or band. They may play to a live audience or perform on a radio and television, or record music in a recording studio. The type of music they play may be classical, modern, avant-garde, rock or pop, jazz, folk, or dance music.

The Job

Music is a demanding career, needing hard work, motivation, and dedication. All musicians must practice constantly to improve their technique. The term musician covers a wide range of jobs.

Instrumental musicians usually play a string, brass, woodwind, or percussion instrument, or an electronic synthesizer. Many musicians work in orchestras combining concerts, recording sessions, and regular rehearsals with considerable amounts of traveling - both in their own countries and abroad. Small groups of musicians may work together to create and perform music in a band or ensemble. Some classical musicians work as accompanists with singers or choirs, or perform in churches or temples. The most talented musicians give solo recitals or feature as soloists with an orchestra. Many musicians would like to become soloists, but also performance is artistically, physically, and technically extremely demanding and soloists need the personality and the stamina to go with outstanding talent. Many musicians spend large amount of time in recording studios or making promotional videos. Some musicians work closely with the composer.

Singers interpret vocal music using their knowledge of voice production, phrasing, melody, and harmony. They sing character parts or perform in their own

individual styles. Singers are classified according to the type of music they sing and the range of their voice, such as soprano, mezzo-soprano, contralto, tenor, baritone, or bass. Many singers work in open houses or perform in choirs. An international opera house is unlikely to employ singers under the age of 23, and most will be considerably older. Singers may supplement their income with session work. Pro singers usually sing with bands and perform live gigs. In pop/rock music, success depends less on talent and more on the ability to find a sound and an image that will sell.

Composers create original music, such as symphonies, sonatas, quartets, operas, and popular songs. They transcribe their ideas into musical notation using rhythms, tone, harmony, and melody. Popular songwriters often compose and edit music using computers. Only a few new classical works are performed in any year. Most established modern composers make their living from writing film or TV music.



Skills and Personal Qualities

Conductors use conducting techniques to lead orchestras and bands and persuade them to interpret the music in a certain way. They audition and select musicians and direct rehearsals and performances. Conductors usually are instrumentalists or singers who have gained experience as performers and who know a great deal about all the instruments of an orchestra and their capabilities.

Arrangers and orchestrators take a composer's work and transcribe it for the sections of the orchestra and singers to perform. Those who play new music may have to listen to recordings and copy the sound themselves rather than work from printed music. Copyists assist by copying down the various parts of the musical compositions. Librettists write words to opera and theatre scores. Lyricists write words to songs.

Choral directors conduct choirs and glee clubs. They audition and select singers and direct rehearsals and performances to achieve the desired musical effect.

Many musicians supplement their income through teaching part-time, or they may make teaching a full-time career. Performing musicians work hours. Most will give performances in the evening and at weekends, while recording, practicing and rehearsals take place during the day. The workplace may be anywhere from concert house to a school hall, from a recording studio to an outdoor arena.

Traveling is part of most musicians' way of life. Successful soloists, group, or orchestras may have staff travelling ahead or with them who manage all the travel arrangements and book accommodation. Foreign tours can be particularly gruelling. Life on the gig circuit can be tiring and, at times, uncomfortable.

Attention to detail
Communication skills
Creativity
Critical thinking
Dedication
Manual dexterity
Patience
Resilience
Self-confidence
Self-discipline
Musical sensitivity

Qualifications

Useful subjects include English Language, Mathematics, the Social Sciences, Music, and English Literature etc.

For more information, contact:

The relevant professional body such as The Performing Musicians Association of Nigeria (PMAN), Otigba Street, Ikeja, Lagos.

OR

The Department of Music
University of Lagos
Akoka, Lagos.

Adapted from Professional and Technical Careers. A Guide from World Book.



Profile of a Role Model Adhiambo Odaga

doctorate degree with a research specialty in planning for developing countries.

A few years after the program, she won a fellowship to work at the International Potato Institute in Cameroon. From there, she proceeded to work at the World Bank. Her first time of coming to Nigeria was in 1987.

On her guiding principles, she said “life is about finding what your talents and gifts are. Once you find your talents and gifts, you can use them and live a life where you do what you like to do and you are passionate about it”

Again, being honest, straight forward, speaking the truth, doing my best and giving a helping hand to others are some of the other values, I cherish, she chipped in.

On her work as a Country Representative of Ford Foundation, she said it was a humbling experience when she was appointed the Representative for the Foundation’s West Africa office three years ago and that she has represented Africa well.

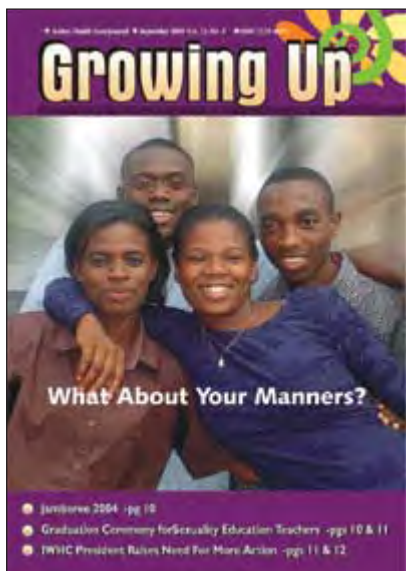
Dr. Adhiambo Odaga who was recently honoured by President Olusegun Obasanjo is a proud recipient of a Member of the Order of the Federal Republic (MFR). To most Nigerians, the national award represents hard work, diligence, improving the plight of the less-privileged members of the society and helping in the development of the country. Dr. Odaga wants to be remembered for being a professional and as one whose mission in Nigeria, West Africa through support to partners are achieved.

Adapted from the Guardian Newspaper, December 11, 2004.

Dr. Adhiambo Odaga is no stranger in Nigeria. This amiable lady is the Representative of the Ford Foundation in West Africa. A Kenyan by birth, she had always wanted to work in the area of development in any African Country and so coming from a family where education was the best legacy parents could bequeath to their children, no matter whether the child was male or female, her parents did not hesitate to send her to Westline Primary School in Nairobi in 1968. According to her, she belonged to the generation where, once you were in the primary school, you were likely to move on to the secondary school and then to the University. To her, everything moved so fast. Everybody wanted to study abroad and when the opportunity came, she grabbed it with “both hands”. She was offered admission to study Urban Economic Development in the United States in February 1981. While earning her Bachelor’s Degree, she worked as a planning intern for St. Paul’s Planning and Economic Development. From St. Catherine’s college, she moved to the University of California, Berkeley, in 1986, and become Kenya’s first Rhodes scholar and the first in the University since 1964. She later enrolled in Oxford University’s School of Anthropology and Geography, where she obtained a

LETTERS

to the editor



WHAT ABOUT YOUR MANNERS

Thanks for choosing a nice theme, "What about your Manners". The article was very educative and informative. This is very commendable as it shows that your focus is on the young people. Young people will never stop learning and will never stop reading your Newsletter as we continue to be informed and educated on issues that really affect us. More grease to your elbows.

Andy Effiong
Ojodu, Lagos.

APPRECIATION

I want to commend you all who have put your heads together to come up with this piece of material. 'The Growing Up' Newsletter is really enlightening and I got to know about it through one of my classmates and I have found it very educative. I don't want to miss any edition. Keep up the good work.

Katherine Ogbanje
Gboko, Benue State.

Having gone through your highly educative and informative Newsletter, I must state categorically that I'm impressed with the poems, true life story, the design of the magazine and the cover stories.

However, I must suggest that more columns should be added such as sports and quiz columns. This will boost your readership since most young people like sports and games.

Tope Babalola
Ikeja, Lagos.

I would like to use this medium to appreciate the effort put into producing a wonderful Newsletter for the young people. Thanks for designing such a beautiful Newsletter. I appreciate it and I'm looking forward to receiving subsequent editions.

Samuel Ekwe
Shomolu, Lagos.

Dear Readers,

Please endeavor to send in your comments, recommendations, suggestions, etc. after going through the newsletter as these would help us come up with an improved edition. You can also send in your poems/articles for publication.

Thanks,
Editor.

Resources

The materials listed here are resources on adolescent development. These are some of the books published by Action Health Incorporated. One can access these materials in our reference library at the AHI Youth Centre located at 17 Lawal Street, Off Oweh Street, Jibowu, Lagos.

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (Trainers' Resource Manual)

By Action Health Incorporated

This is a comprehensive sexuality manual that provides step-by-step approach to the teaching of Sexuality Education. It provides instructional materials for teaching different topics. It is a response to HIV/AIDS as well as promoting positive sexuality.

This trainers' manual clearly brings out the meaning of Sexuality Education, the goals, the need for Sexuality Education and the Nigerian approach.

This book is quite useful for teachers of Sexuality Education as well as peer educators and young people who want to know more about sexuality and reproductive health issues.

Training Manual For Adolescent-friendly Health Service Providers

By Action Health Incorporated

This book is the result of the documentation of various training programmes organized and co-facilitated by Action Health Incorporated (AHI) and its many years experience in dealing with adolescent health and development.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic has brought to the fore the need to provide Adolescent and Youth Friendly Health Services (AYFHS). This book therefore is targeted at the training of providers of Adolescent and Youth Friendly Health Services so as to be able to tackle the challenges posed by STIs/HIV/AIDS and other Health related problems.

A Guide To Setting Up Health And Life Planning Clubs

By Action Health Incorporated

Adolescence is a period of preparation for adulthood. During this time, developmental experiences including physical and sexual maturation, social and economic independence and the development of identity occur. This period offers health providers and youth development workers a unique opportunity to influence adolescents positively.

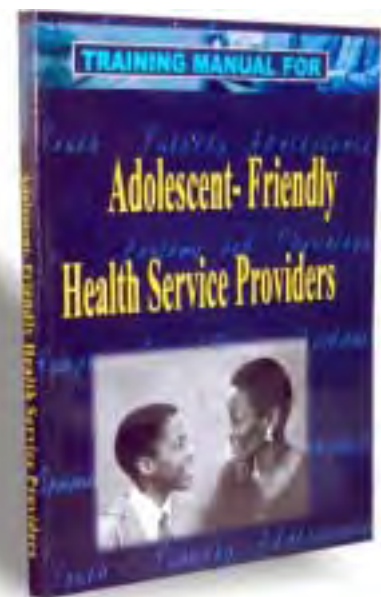
This book therefore brings out the goals and objectives of the Health and Life Planning Club, addresses the various concepts of Health and Life Planning clubs and the benefits of membership of this club.

Guide For Setting Up Adolescent- Friendly Health Services

By Action Health Incorporated

Youth have numerous unmet physical, psychological and social health needs and the understanding and provision of adolescent and youth friendly health services is an important step in addressing these needs. It is therefore crucial to have a tool for setting up youth friendly health services.

This book highlights the elements of adolescent and youth friendliness in health services delivery describes the minimum standards for adolescent and youth friendly services and gives in-depth information on appropriate service delivery, practices and procedures. It defines who a healthy youth is; why focus on adolescents? etc.



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