



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

GOODWILL AMBASSADOR NICOL DAVID POWER OF YOUNG PEOPLE TO STOP HIV/AIDS

Kuala Lumpur, 6 February 2004 – The United Nations (UN) and the United Nations Association of Malaysia (UNAM) today announced the launch of an Essay Competition focused on harnessing the power of young people in the response to HIV/AIDS.

The theme of the Essay Competition is “Young People As A Force For Change In A World With AIDS”, and is opened to Malaysian residents aged between 18 – 24 years.

“This essay competition aims to provoke thought among young people, on what their role is in responding to the HIV epidemic,” said Dr Maxine Olson, head of the UN in Malaysia.

“We would like to encourage them to think of how they can play a role, and to see how every small drop adds to the greater effort of managing the negative effects of HIV/AIDS. We would like to encourage young people to break the silence and denial surrounding AIDS, and help address the stigma that is associated with it.”

Dr Olson said that the competition focuses on young people aged between 18 – 24 because they are the ones who are most vulnerable to HIV infection.

“Globally, 50% of all new cases are among young people aged between 15 – 24 years. In Malaysia, 80% of all new infections occur among those aged between 13 – 39 years. It makes sense to protect them from infection because they are the most productive members of society, and nations rely on them for the country's development.”

She added that young people have a great role to play in the response to HIV/AIDS.

“Young people are still able to change their attitudes and un-learn the damaging socio-cultural factors that fuel the epidemic. They have the energy, optimism, enthusiasm, creativity and compassion to prevent new cases, care for people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS and destigmatise the epidemic,” said Dr Olson.

The winners of the essay competition will be announced in conjunction with UN Day in October.

In efforts to upscale the issues brought forth through these essays, UN and UNAM will publish the 30 final essays into a booklet for distribution. These booklets are expected to be launched in conjunction with World AIDS Day on 1 December 2003.

Prizes will be awarded to First and Second place winners of EACH topic. Prizes will not be categorised according to language.

First Place Winners:

Cash prize of RM800.00
Certificate
Collection of HIV/AIDS books
UN Badge

Second Place Winners:

Cash prize of RM500.00
Certificate
Collection of HIV/AIDS books
UN Badge

30 FINALISTS

Certificate
Collection of HIV/AIDS books
UN Badge

The deadline for essay submissions is **10 September 2003**. Completed essays can be sent to:

UN/UNAM Essay Competition
The United Nations
Wisma UN, Block C, Kompleks Pejabat Damansara
Jalan Dungun, Damansara Heights
50490 Kuala Lumpur.

Essays can also be sent electronically via email to: anushia.kandasamy@undp.org

Essay competition forms will be distributed through colleges, universities, public libraries, selected bookstores and through Non-Governmental Organisations.

Updates on where to obtain forms will be sent to the media regularly.

Forms and additional information are currently available at the UNDP Malaysia website at: www.undp.org.my or at the UNAM website at: www.unam.org.my

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