



## Youth AIDS campaigners to celebrate World AIDS Day at ICASA

*Hundreds of youth AIDS campaigners and activists from the African region as well as from around the world are gathering for a candlelight memorial in Gorée Island<sup>1</sup>, Senegal, on 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2008, which marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of World AIDS Day. The youth World AIDS Day event signals increasing concern over the insufficient progress in the achievement of youth universal access targets, in terms of prevention, treatment, care and support. Organised by the World AIDS Campaign and the International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA) YouthFront, with the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the memorial will take place during the ICASA youth preconference, to be held immediately prior to the 15<sup>th</sup> International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa.*

With 2010 - the year by which universal access was promised to be achieved - approaching, youth campaigners are stepping up their efforts, showing the world that they are leaders in the AIDS response. Of the 2.7 million new HIV infections in 2007, about 45% were among young people aged 15 to 24 years and around 70% of the world's young HIV positive live in Sub-Saharan Africa. An effective response to AIDS must include young people's voices, concerns and realities.

The theme for World AIDS Day 2008 is "Leadership". Building on this, the ICASA youth World AIDS Day event will focus on "Youth Leadership". Great examples of this leadership will be highlighted during the memorial, including youth spokespeople and key messages.

All participants of the youth preconference, as well as broader civil society, organisations of people living with HIV and the local community are invited to take part of this event.

These events will also share the same messages as those to be featured at World AIDS Day events in India, as an example of harmonization of messages, youth coordination and partnership in the response to AIDS. For more information about the India events, see [www.indiaworldaidscampaign.org](http://www.indiaworldaidscampaign.org)

### Note to Editors

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The World AIDS Campaign supports, strengthens and connects campaigns that hold leaders accountable for their promises on HIV and AIDS. "Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise." is the slogan for the World AIDS Campaign from 2005-2010. The World AIDS Campaign is a global coalition governed by experienced campaigning networks of labour, faith, business, NGOs, media, youth, women, and people living with HIV and AIDS. For more information please go to: [www.worldaidscampaign.org](http://www.worldaidscampaign.org)

The YouthFront is a coalition of youth organisations/coalitions/networks working on HIV/AIDS and STIs as well as the sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people in Africa. This coalition is mandated to ensuring the effective and meaningful youth participation in ICASA 2008 through organising a comprehensive youth programme for the conference. Slated activities include a youth pre-conference, youth pavilion, youth reception, youth advocacy rally

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<sup>1</sup> Gorée Island is a small Island near Dakar which is placed in UNESCO's World heritage list and is famous for it "house of slavery". Thousands of tourists from

and candle light vigil, youth speakers in the main ICASA conference. These activities aim to ensure that young people take leadership roles in the HIV/AIDS response in Africa.

The 15th International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA), will take place in Dakar, Senegal, from 3-7 December 2008. The central theme is: "Africa's Response: Face the facts". It will be an opportunity to evaluate the many HIV initiatives in order to recognize their contributions, successes and ambitions, as well as to acknowledge their weaknesses and shortfalls. At ICASA 2008, International and African experts will evaluate the current state of the HIV and STI epidemics with regard to science, communities and leadership. <http://www.icasadakar2008.org/>