

MEDIA RELEASE

Youth Media Guyana Launched Six young Guyanese pledge to change the country

Georgetown, Guyana, UNICEF – May 21, 2007 – With the aim of empowering young people and providing an avenue to help them advocate for their rights, six young Guyanese have come together and pledged to change the country they live in, one child at a time, as they launched the first ever youth media movement in the country – Youth Media Guyana.

Formed out of a core group of six persons, who attended the Kid & Docs Festival in Paramaribo, Suriname in December 2006, the recently established youth media group aims to enable children to express themselves in various ways and provide them a platform to have their voices heard, particularly through a monthly television newscast and subsequently via radio and print media.

The group was officially launched on Tuesday, May 15th through the collaborative efforts of the National Communication Network (NCN), the National Commission on the Rights of the Child (NCRC) and UNICEF. Also as part of the launch, some 150 children from seven regions across the country participated in training workshops on May 16 and 17, empowering them in the use of digital media for capturing the ideas and activities of young people. The training was facilitated by Stitching the Backlot Group from Suriname.

Addressing the gathering of mainly school children and counterpart representatives, YMG member Lomeharshansham Lall emphasized that, “for too long we have been told we are the future, on the contrary, we are the present. It is often said we lack direction and ambition, we want to highlight some of us who have proved this wrong.”

Also speaking at the launch ceremony, Chief Executive Officer of the NCN, Mohamed Sattaur said the venture will see several of the nation’s youths being trained in the use of digital technology, enabling them to make short videos. “At least this kind of empowerment promotes literacy and will give our young people a greater appreciation of what is being done, not only at the NCN but also at the other media agencies,” Sattaur said. He further explained that this process will eventually see the youths contributing to the development of quality media, thus raising the standards and building a stronger image as the perception of the Guyanese media is transformed. He said NCN was happy to be associated with the project and will facilitate the monthly productions, provide free air time and physical space for YMG to work.

Commenting on behalf of UNICEF, Programme Coordinator Dennis Arends pointed out that the formation of the group is indeed crucial since young people have the potential to effect positive changes. “They have voices and opinions, they have ideas and thoughts that can influence their development, shape the future and change the world for all of us...we just have to listen to them,” he asserted. He continued that it is this very measure that YMG will facilitate once it is utilised effectively.

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Chairperson of the NCRC, First Lady Varshnie Jagdeo described the YMG as an exciting concept with much potential, but reminded young people that rights come with responsibilities. She urged them to remain focused, stay in school and study, pointing out that making a difference in society does not mean that millions of dollars are required, but rather that a commitment is needed.

Youth Media Guyana is comprised of representatives from the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport – Justim Mounter and Shabir Ali, NCN’s Andrea Byran and Vidya Bijlall; the Varqa Foundation’s Lomeharshansham Lall and from the President’s College, Joel Joseph.

Youth Media Guyana with sponsors at the Launch. From left: Lomeharshansham Lall, First Lady Varshnie Jagdeo, Vidya Bijlall, Shabir Abi, UNICEF’s Dennis Arends, Joel Joseph, Justim Mounter, NCN’s Mohamed Sattaur and Andrea Bryan.



About UNICEF

UNICEF is on the ground in 155 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world’s largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.

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