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MEDIA RELEASE

LOCAL YOUTH ADVOCATES GIVE INTERNATIONAL COUNTERPARTS A TASTE OF TOBACCO-FREE SOCIAL MOVEMENT, SINGAPORE STYLE

From roving Kampong Glam to doing the hip hop, Singapore's youth tobacco control advocacy has a flavour of its own

Singapore, 22 March 2012: Hailing from different countries all over the world, a dozen youths experience the 'glam' lifestyle while traipsing around a cultural enclave in tropical Singapore in order to raise awareness of the ills of *shisha* smoking.

2. Actually, what they are exploring is Singapore's iconic Kampong 'Glam', where Singapore's first *shisha* awareness campaign by the Health Promotion Board (HPB) is being launched as one of the highlights of its 'Live It Up Without Lighting Up' (LIUWLU) Global Movement.

3. A highlight of the campaign is a nine-minute 'Idiot's Guide to *Shisha*' video. Putting a clever spin on the popular 'Idiot's Guidebooks', the video appears at first glance to give viewers a step-by-step guide on how to assemble a *shisha* pipe. As the 'guru' in the video proceeds to describe each element of the hookah, however, he actually explains how each part causes harm to one's health, ultimately turning viewers away from smoking *shisha*.

4. Research shows that a typical hour-long *shisha* smoking session is equivalent to inhaling smoke from 100 or more cigarettes. Water pipe smoking also delivers the addictive drug nicotine, which is at least as toxic as cigarette smoke. Yet, *shisha* smoking is perceived as a 'safer' alternative to cigarette smoking because of many myths surrounding the product and the way it is used.

5. In addition to screening the video on YouTube and sending geo-targeted MMS to SingTel subscribers in the vicinity to dissuade them from smoking *shisha*, the campaign launch also involves on-ground activation as 12 local and international youth advocates distribute educational material and share information about the harmful effects of *shisha* smoking. *(Please refer to Annex A for more details)*
6. Organised by HPB in conjunction with the 15th World Conference on Tobacco or Health (WCTOH), the LIUWLU Global Movement is a ground-up initiative that empowers youths to take a stand against tobacco use while encouraging them to decide how they want to benefit from a smoke-free lifestyle; for instance, by channelling their healthy energy to groom a talent or realise a dream. *(Please refer to Annex B for more details)*
7. To illustrate the cool options that go with a healthy lifestyle, 65 youth advocates from Asia to the Americas joined more than 300 local youth advocates at *SCAPE Warehouse in a dance party with a song-and-dance highlight specially composed by local indie musician Patrick Chng, and choreographed by Zaini Tahir.
8. Students from local schools and dance institutions also pitted their hip hop moves before an esteemed panel of judges, which included Hollywood choreographer Dejan Tubic, who has worked with artistes Usher and Toni Braxton.
9. The LIUWLU Global Movement does not end with the dance at *SCAPE. Armed with LIUWLU tool kits provided by HPB, foreign youth advocates will be able to execute their own LIUWLU advocacy projects at home.
10. In addition, HPB will check in on these local and international advocates in December 2012 so as to provide further guidance in their advocacy efforts. They will also be invited to share their LIUWLU movements and other initiatives on the HPB youth lifestyle portal 'Breathe.sg' and the 'Global Youth Action on Tobacco' (GYAT) Facebook page.
11. One young advocate who intends to start her own tobacco control social movement is 24-year-old Surabhi Shastri from India, who feels a similar dance competition may just work at home, given India's strong Bollywood culture.
12. Together with the rest of her fellow advocates, Surabhi also attended a two-day series of workshops and interactive discussions revolving around the theme 'Towards a Tobacco-free World: Youth Can Make a Difference'. *(Please refer to Annex C for more details)*

13. On 24 March, all the youth advocates will present at a WCTOH symposium, an action plan based on what they have learnt in the workshops, on the activation ground and by networking with one another.

14. “In order to succeed in our fight against tobacco use, it is important to prevent young smokers from lighting up. A top-down clamp on underage smokers must be complemented by other youth-centric approaches including peer education, inspirational messages and new media platforms such as HPB’s ‘Idiot’s Guide to *Shisha*’ video on YouTube. By exposing our youth tobacco control advocates to global best practices and perspectives, and inspiring them to influence their peers against tobacco use, we hope to counter some of the factors that lead youths to experiment with tobacco, such as peer pressure and misconceptions that smoking is fashionable,” said Mr Ang Hak Seng, Chief Executive Officer, HPB.

15. HPB has long recognised the importance of youth advocacy in tobacco control, with peer-led education forming a key strategic thrust in its tobacco control strategies.

16. In September 2005, HPB set up the Youth Advolution for Health (YAH) Programme, Singapore’s first youth-led health advocacy programme aimed at empowering youths to advocate a healthy lifestyle and come up with revolutionary methods of promoting healthy lifestyles among their peers.

17. Since then, the local youth advocacy scene has flourished, with many youths tapping on YAH grants to fund their advocacy projects. To date, more than 40 grants have been awarded for anti-tobacco projects, with an estimated outreach of more than 150,000 youths. *(Please refer to Annex D for more details)*

18. Over the years, YAH advocates have developed novel advocacy programmes to spread awareness not just among their peers, but also to relevant stakeholders such as tobacco retailers to remind them not to sell tobacco products to underage youths. Youth advocacy has also been effective in ‘de-normalising’ and ‘de-glamourising’ the perception that smoking is an acceptable norm. *(Please refer to Annex E for more details)*

19. Through these sustained efforts, HPB hopes to continue to share and leverage on best practices in youth tobacco control globally to further lower local youth smoking prevalence. Singapore has one of the lowest prevalence of youth smoking in the world. According to results from

the Student Health Survey 2009, the prevalence of students aged 13 to 16 who have smoked at least once in the last 30 days fell from nine per cent in 2006 to six per cent in 2009.

20. This decline is attributable to HPB's comprehensive multi-pronged tobacco control efforts that encompass taxation, legislation, partnerships and provision of smoking cessation services. Educational and prevention programmes, with a focus on peer-led initiatives, will continue to form a key strategic thrust in reaching out to youths.

ANNEX A: Background on Shisha in Singapore

ANNEX B: 'Live It Up Without Lighting Up' Global Movement

ANNEX C: WCTOH Youth Pre-Conference

ANNEX D: Youth Advolution for Health (YAH) Programme

ANNEX E: Profiles of Youth Advolution for Health (YAH) Advocates

Photographs and Video Footage

Video footage of the Youth Pre-conference is available for download at the following link, <https://rcpt.yousendit.com/1427669324/a1f907f6002dc1f233b3355f74cf45fc>.

High resolution photographs and video footage of the 'Live It Up Without Lighting Up' Global Movement dance competition are available for download at the following link until 5 April 2012, <http://wtrns.fr/RfNFga5w1vCFiLZ>

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BACKGROUND ON *SHISHA* IN SINGAPORE

While HPB has taken active steps to educate youths and young adults on the negative health impacts of *shisha* smoking since 2007, recent focus group discussions with youths, both smokers and non-smokers, have revealed that they believe *shisha* smoking to be safer than cigarette smoking. This may be largely attributed to the fruity smell of the *shisha* smoke, lack of tobacco after-taste and deliberate misinformation from *shisha* retailers, who tout *shisha* as a safe alternative to cigarettes.

While many *shisha* smokers may consider this practice less harmful than smoking cigarettes, *shisha* smoking carries many of the same health risks as cigarettes, including oral cancer, lung cancer, stomach cancer, cancer of the esophagus, reduced lung function, and decreased fertility.

A typical hour-long *shisha* smoking session involves inhaling as much smoke as that from 100 or more cigarettes. Water pipe smoking delivers the addictive drug nicotine and is at least as toxic as cigarette smoke.

Yet, *shisha* smoking is perceived as a 'safer' alternative to cigarette smoking because of many myths surrounding the product and the way it is used. The targeted *shisha* awareness campaign, 'Idiot's Guide to *Shisha*', dispels these myths, delivering hard facts about *shisha* smoking in a clever way to raise awareness that *shisha* is not a safe alternative to smoking cigarettes.

'LIVE IT UP WITHOUT LIGHTING UP' GLOBAL MOVEMENT LAUNCH

In conjunction with the World Conference on Tobacco or Health, 65 international youth delegates gather together with more than 300 local youths to launch the 'Live It Up Without Lighting Up' Global Movement on 21 March 2012 at *SCAPE, Warehouse.

This global social movement empowers youths to use creative platforms such as music, sports and drama to encourage a tobacco-free lifestyle among youths.

HPB launched the 'Live It Up Without Lighting Up' Global Movement with a dance party through music and dance, mediums which resonate strongly with youths. In a show of youth solidarity and talent, the dance party united youths representing 23 countries worldwide who believe in leading a smoke-free lifestyle through various activities such as:

- Participating in a mass dance parade of over 200 youths, showcasing a dance routine specially choreographed for a song composed and remixed for the 'Live It Up Without Lighting Up' Global Movement by local musicians
- Pitting their skills in a dance competition featuring 9 dance teams from the various educational institutions in Singapore
- Pledging their support for a smoke-free lifestyle on a monogram wall
- Setting a record for the most number of Twitter followers from a single event within two hours

'Live It Up Without Lighting Up' song & dance

A team of smoke-free musicians from various bands collaborated to produce the 'Live It Up Without Lighting Up' song. They include indie musician Patrick Chng, Matthew Lim (A Vacant Affair), Sam Cooper (Dirt Radical), ShiGGaShay, Mark John Hariman, Benjamin Loh (Black Diamond Ninjas), Gabriel De Souza and Martin Kong (Caracal) . A dance remix of the song was produced, with an instructional dance video specially choreographed by Zaini Tahir, Assistant Director (Artistic Development) of the Republic Cultural Centre at Republic Polytechnic. Over 200 youths participated in the dance to launch the 'Live It Up Without Lighting Up' Global Movement.

'Live It Up Without Lighting Up' dance competition

From among 23 teams, youth from local educational institutions and dance schools, 10 teams were shortlisted by public vote on Facebook to compete in the grand finals of 'Live It Up Without Lighting Up' dance competition. Teams were required to include 30 seconds of the 'Live It Up Without Lighting Up' song and choreography in their performance to battle for the top prize.

The winning team walked away with SGD\$3,000 in cash and a master dance class with Dejan Tubic, top Hollywood choreographer who has choreographed for shows including America's Got Talent, So You Think You Can Dance and has performed for artistes such as Usher and Toni Braxton. An established choreographer, Dejan has over 40 million views on his [YouTube channel](#).

Setting a Record

In the spirit of galvanising youth support for a tobacco-free lifestyle, the 'Live It Up Without Lighting Up' Global Movement set a record for the most number of Twitter followers within a span of two hours.



Youth tobacco-control advocates pit their hip-hop skills at the HPB 'Live It Up Without Lighting Up' Global Movement



Over 300 local youth tobacco-control advocates unite with counterparts from over 23 countries at the HPB 'Live It Up Without Lighting Up' Global Movement



Dejan Tubic, Hollywood dance choreographer pledging his support for a tobacco-free lifestyle at the HPB 'Live It Up Without Lighting Up' Global Movement



Global youth pledging their support for a tobacco-free lifestyle at the HPB 'Live It Up Without Lighting Up' Global Movement



The winning team 'Fad Faction' at the 'Live It Up Without Lighting Up' Global Movement Dance Competition



Dr K Vijaya, Director, Youth Health Division, HPB accepting the Singapore Book of Record for most number of Twitter followers within the first 2 hours of the 'Live It Up Without Lighting Up' Global Movement

WCTOH YOUTH PRE-CONFERENCE

To equip youths in their advocacy efforts, HPB organised a youth pre-conference themed 'Towards a Tobacco-free World: Youth Can Make a Difference' for youths aged 18 to 35, to build advocacy skills to counter the global tobacco epidemic on 19 and 20 March 2012. Over the course of two days, local and international youth delegates from 23 countries were led by experienced tobacco-control practitioners through a series of interactive discussions and hands-on workshops which empowered them with the knowledge, skills and strategies to further peer-led tobacco control efforts.

This year's youth pre-conference has the most diverse representation of youth delegates since its inception at the 13th WCTOH held in Washington six years ago. With participants from Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines, Nigeria, Argentina and the USA, youth advocates benefitted tremendously from the breadth and depth of experiences shared.

The pre-conference covered topics such as the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the economics of tobacco and the formulation of public health policy and evolution of tobacco marketing tactics over the years. The youths were also equipped with various tools to develop effective advocacy projects. This pre-conference provided youths with a valuable platform to network and discuss tobacco control issues and ultimately harness their creativity, energy and 'can do' spirit in the global fight against tobacco use.

YOUTH ADVOLUTION FOR HEALTH (YAH) PROGRAMME

Youth Advolution for Health (YAH) is Singapore's first youth-led health advocacy programme aimed at empowering youths to advocate for a healthy lifestyle, engaging youths in an interactive manner in the various health issues and concerns, and inspiring youths to come up with revolutionary and creative methods of promoting health among their peers. This programme is supported by the Health Promotion Board (HPB) and targeted at youths aged 17 to 25.

First launched in September 2005, YAH started off with only six passionate youths, focusing only on smoke-free messages. Now, YAH has expanded to a big family of over 50 members. The topics have also expanded to include sexual health, mental wellness, nutrition and regular physical activity.

Local youth groups, within or outside schools, are granted SGD\$1,000 on a reimbursement basis, to develop a tobacco-free project in their schools or communities.

PROFILES OF YOUTH ADVOLUTION FOR HEALTH (YAH) ADVOCATES

- Siti Nurhana Abdul Karim

In her capacity as President of YAH, 22-year-old Siti Nurhana Abdul Karim, leads an executive committee to brainstorm ideas on creative and revolutionary ways to plan and implement outreach and peer-led health advocacy projects.

“When conceptualising the projects, we realised the importance of taking a holistic and multi-prong approach of educating both youth consumers and retailers of tobacco products, who play a very important role in preventing underage smoking,” Siti explained.

Siti is a member of the Youth Pre-Conference Organising Committee, and was involved in planning, organising and implementing the conference activities. She also provided advice based on her experience as a youth advocate.

- Flora Yeo

A member of YAH since 2010, 21-year-old Flora Yeo is a passionate youth advocate, who believes strongly in the impact youths can have on changing their peers’ perspectives on health issues.

“We may not change the entire population at once, but helping small groups at a time goes a long way. As youths, we are constantly growing and willing to accept new things. This attitude allows us to positively influence our peers and change their perceptions on health issues that are unique to us as youths,” she said.