



## Global Campaign News – Issue #34 May 3, 2004

Welcome to the biweekly *Global Campaign News*! The *Global Campaign News* is a forum for international exchange on microbicide activities and information with an aim to build a more informed and integrated movement for microbicide development and other prevention options against HIV and STDs. This and previous issues of GC News are available online at <http://www.global-campaign.org/gcnews.htm>

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### More than one million people “march for women’s lives” in Washington

On April 25<sup>th</sup>, more than one million people of all ages, genders, and races walked together in Washington in support of women’s reproductive rights, health, and justice. The March was the first of its type and size since 1992 and has been touted to be the biggest march to ever take place in Washington. In addition, there were two main stages for speakers from a large cast of activists, movie stars, politicians, and musicians – [www.cspan.org](http://www.cspan.org) includes more than 3 hours of footage from these stages for those of you with very high speed internet access.

The highlight of the march for many Global Campaigners was hearing a speaker talk about microbicides on the main stage. Juanita Williams, a grandmother and an HIV/AIDS activist from New York, talked about the need for microbicides in front of one million people: “What we need is a woman-controlled way to protect ourselves. The good news is that microbicides could be that method. Imagine a gel, creme or suppository that a woman could insert before sex – something effective against HIV so that she was protected no matter what. Imagine what such a product could mean in a world where 7000-8000 women are getting HIV every single day.” As far as we can tell, this is probably the largest gathering of people that have EVER heard the term microbicides.

The Global Campaign for Microbicides had a 30 person delegation at the March. After seeing our banner, teeshirts, placards, buttons, and cards – and after hearing Juanita -- hundreds of people asked about microbicides how they could get involved. Pictures from the March are available in the pdf version of GC News and on the web – [www.global-campaign.org/gcnews.htm](http://www.global-campaign.org/gcnews.htm)

Much of the media coverage titled the event an “abortions rights” or “women’s” march, and did not capture the diversity of the issues or participants. A few media outlets, however, covered the more nuanced messages for comprehensive reproductive health and rights that included but also went beyond access to safe abortions.

The March was inspiring and energizing for most participants, but March organizers are already thinking about the next steps. The Washington Post quotes Eleanor Smeal, president of the Feminist Majority, "Even if we had a million people . . . we've got to inspire long-term, active commitment." One of the major themes of the rally was to ensure that the participants get out and vote in the U.S. elections in November.





## UK campaign targets Her Majesty's government

On April 27<sup>th</sup>, as part of a legislative strategy initiated by the UK Campaign, microbicides became for the first time the topic of an Early Day Motion proposed by Neil Gerrard, the Member of Parliament (MP) who chairs the All Party Parliamentary Group on AIDS (APPGA). The motion called on Her Majesty's Government to "continue to commit sufficient public funds to ensure the timely development and distribution of an effective microbicide". Early Day Motions are a peculiarity of the House of Commons designed to draw attention to an issue and to elicit support for it by inviting other MPs to add their signatures. In addition to the EDM, Neil Gerrard has also submitted a parliamentary question to the Secretary of State for Development, Hilary Benn, who will be required to respond in writing. We hope that this interest will lead to a full debate on the merit of microbicides in the Commons, a first step towards legislation. Introduction of both the motion and the parliamentary question follow a highly successful seminar at Westminster for MPs and peers (members of the House of Lords) organised by the International Partnership on Microbicides and the UK Campaign, a coalition of 15 British agencies working on reproductive health, development and HIV/AIDS. For more information on UK Campaign activities, please get in touch with Althea Cribb at the National AIDS Trust: [policyandcampaigns@nat.org.uk](mailto:policyandcampaigns@nat.org.uk)

## First ever North American advocates meeting

On April 26 and 27, site coordinators came together from 10 sites in the U.S. and Canada for a strategy development and skills building meeting held in at the Global Campaign's Washington office. Laurie Sylla, the coordinator for Connecticut's Microbicides Now says, "the meeting was a great opportunity for seasoned microbicides advocates and advocates newer to the microbicides issue to come together, get to know each other, make connections, and share strategies."

The strategy development session focused on outreach to targeted audiences, involvement of key partners, advocacy strategies, and future plans. Projects in the pipeline include an upcoming short video being produced by the Global Campaign for use in public presentations and a traveling photo exhibit entitled "In Her Mother's Shoes". The skills building session focused on how to convey short and concise messages without jargon about microbicides to a variety of audiences – policy makers, the media, one's own organization, medical doctors, partner groups, and even venture capitalists! Participants also received tips on getting the media's attention, conducting interviews, and public speaking. According to Gary Wolnitzek of the Maryland Campaign for Microbicides, the workshop "was very interactive and gave me a chance to network with my fellow site coordinators in more depth".

Participants spent the final afternoon of the meeting on Capitol Hill visiting the offices of eight Representatives and Senators to urge their support for the Microbicide Development Act and microbicide-specific federal appropriations in the FY05 budget. Thanks to recent such visits, two influential Senators, Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and John Kerry (D-MA), have just signed on to the Act!

A final report on the meeting will be available on the Global Campaign website at the end of May.

## **GAP discusses microbicides and female condoms in U.S. and Holland**

The Association of Indians in America (AIA), the oldest Indian organization in America, has launched Project India to involve Indian Americans in combating HIV/AIDS in India. Dr. Radium Bhattacharya, the director of Gujarat Aids Awareness and Prevention, was a keynote speaker at their fundraising and launch gala event in New York City on April 25. The partnership between AIA and GAP will be developing in the coming months.

Radium also had a chance to emphasize the importance of HIV/AIDS prevention as an invited international expert consultant on issues of gender, stigma and discrimination for the Dutch organization, Cordaid. In a booklet containing 16 personal letters of partner organizations of Cordaid, Radium drew the attention of readers to the research and funding needs for female condoms and microbicides. According to Radium, there are certainly enormous structural changes that are happening slowly, but in the meantime, putting female condoms and eventually microbicides into the hands of women are important ways to empower women.

## **GC Europe enters new era of cooperation on EU policy**

A new era has begun for GC Europe, the joint initiative of the Global Campaign for Microbicides and International Family Health designed to kick-start a European microbicides movement. As of April 12<sup>th</sup>, GC Europe is now located in a new configuration of agencies working on European Union HIV and reproductive health policy, including the Stop AIDS Alliance and the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI). It is expected that other organisations will join by the end of 2004, making the office a hub for shared learning and strategising in Europe. A launch party will be held in May to celebrate this new endeavour. To receive more information and to sign up for updates on European activities, please contact Rebekah Webb at [rwebb@global-campaign.org](mailto:rwebb@global-campaign.org).

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We welcome your input and contributions for future issues! Correspondence can be addressed to [info@global-campaign.org](mailto:info@global-campaign.org). If you would like to unsubscribe to the Global Campaign News, please reply to this e-mail with the subject line: UNSUBSCRIBE.