

## AYA GHANA PRESENTS INNOVATIVE HIV/AIDS GAME TO MOE/GES

On 30<sup>th</sup> December 2002 AYA Ghana, led by Mr Moses Mukasa the Country Representative, presented six thousand copies of the innovative HIV/AIDS game to Hon Christine Churcher, the Minister of State Responsible for Basic Secondary and Girl Child Education in the fore courts of the Ministry of Education Building. The ceremony was well attended by all the ten Regional Directors of Education, The in-coming and outgoing Directors General of Education and the ICPC. Also in attendance were all directors and divisional heads of units of the ministry. Staff of all shades of the ministry were represented as well as press men and women from various press houses in Accra including TV3, Metro TV, Daily Graphic, Ghanaian Times, Peace FM and Free Press and the general public. Thirty five young people participated.

In his welcome address, the outgoing Acting Director General of the GES, Mr Budu-Smith expressed his delight at the donation of the games by AYA to the MOE/GES. He stated that the youth of Ghana constituted a large proportion of the country's population and were confronted with serious sexual and reproductive health problems such as teenage pregnancy and STI's (including HIV/AIDS). This situation, he said, posed a problem to the development of the youth who constitute the backbone for sustainable development and therefore a valuable asset to the nation. Mr Budu-Smith further stressed, that although a number of interventions had been introduced in the past to address the issue of the sexual and reproductive health challenges of the youth, a lot more still needed to be done to change the behaviour of the youth. He described the concept of the HIV/AIDS game as ingenious and commended AYA for opting to donate the six thousand copies to the GES/MOH free of charge.

In her acceptance address, Hon. Christine Churcher expressed her gratitude to AYA for the presentation of the games. She stated that even though reproductive health was a priority for most governments all over the world, issues of adolescent reproductive health were still sensitive issues and there was the need to realise that adolescents need special guidance. She outlined a number of interventions that the government had put in place to help improve the quality of adolescent reproductive health especially in the area of HIV/AIDS prevention and also affirmed that the government of Ghana views the youth as the nation's most valuable resource for long-term development. In a pensive mood, she described the presentation as the best present to the Ministry in 2002 and entreated all to see it as the best Christmas present for the Ministry. She could not hide her emotions when she stated that she had no message for the ten Directors present, but that they should take the presentation of the HIV/AIDS games by AYA to the ministry as her message of hope for the year 2003 since the game had the potential to bridge the parent-child as well as the teacher-pupil communication gap on discussing adolescent sexuality issues. She ended by saying that her ministry was honoured by the presentation and would make sure that the games reached children in deprived areas and appealed to other organisations and individuals to help by purchasing more copies of the games to be distributed to other schools not covered by AYA and its partners.