

Handing out the star trophy was no less than Melinda Gates, who with her husband Bill and their friend Warren Buffet who have been the galvanizing force behind an unprecedented effort to rally private-sector support for public health programs.

Joining the senator onstage were two other recipients of the "Rising Star": Imane Khachani, a Moroccan doctor working with young people on sexual and reproductive health research and advocacy, and a young man, Remy Shawa, an HIV activist who started a "Men and Gender" program in South Africa.

It had been a dizzying, dazzling three days, a smorgasbord of plenary sessions, group discussions, and workshops that took place simultaneously in the huge conference venue, film showings, brief talks at a "Speakers' Corner," and exhibits of various NGOs and international groups promoting their causes and programs.

Jill Sheffield, president of "Women Deliver," summed it up by the numbers: more than 4,500 participants from 149 countries, including 411 journalists, the largest number the conference has gathered.