



Event Organizing Toolkit

**World AIDS Day
December 1, 2012**

“Getting to zero: zero new HIV infections. Zero discrimination. Zero AIDS related deaths”

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The theme for this year’s World AIDS Day is **Getting to Zero**, which gives you an opportunity to highlight prevention and care as fundamental human rights through a wide range of possible activities in your community. Since 1988, World AIDS Day has been about increasing interest, inspiring involvement, fighting prejudice, and working to stop the spread of this disease. This year, we are hoping to target **more** youth in **more** countries to step up in ending the spread of HIV!

Focusing on our theme of Universal Access and Human Rights, you can organize an event that best suits the needs of your own community. It could be a networking meeting, a training, a film screening, a panel discussion, a letter writing session to public officials on a particular issue, a protest of a bad policy, program, or human rights abuse, a fundraiser, a volunteer service day at a clinic or hospice, or whatever else you think would work well in your community.

We hope that this toolkit will help make your event a success!

Why “Getting to Zero”?

- Backed by the United Nations, the "Getting to Zero" campaign (Zero New HIV Infections, Zero Discrimination and Zero AIDS Related Deaths) runs until 2015 and builds on 2010's successful World AIDS Day "Light for Rights" initiative encompassing a range of vital issues identified by key affected populations.
- World AIDS day is important in reminding people that HIV has not gone away, and that there are many things still to be done. The theme encourages us to deepen understanding, develop partnership and challenge discriminatory laws, policies and practices that stand in the way of access for all to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.
- Global leaders have pledged to work towards universal access to HIV and AIDS treatment, prevention and care, recognizing them as fundamental human rights.
- In low and middle-income countries, less than half of those in need of antiretroviral therapy are receiving it, and too many do not have access to adequate care.
- Violations against human rights fuel the spread of HIV, putting marginalized groups, such as injection drug users and sex workers, at a higher risk of HIV infection. By promoting individual human rights, new infections can be prevented and people who have HIV can live free from discrimination. Youth leaders must work in partnership with adult leaders, who have the responsibility to make youth HIV and AIDS issues their priority.
- World AIDS Day provides an opportunity for all of us to take action and ensure that human rights are protected and global targets for prevention, treatment, and care are met.

Thinking Strategically, Acting Effectively

In order to make sure that your event has the most impact, it's useful to take some time before you start planning what kind of event will best accomplish your goals. **Start early!** A good event takes time to prepare. **Be realistic!** What can you accomplish with limited time and resources? The questions below should give you a framework to figure out exactly what you're going to do and how best to do it. So gather your co-organizers, a pen, and some paper, and start thinking!

What's your issue?

In choosing how to focus your event, consider some key questions. What gets people in your community angry or excited? Taking another approach: what key issues might be going unnoticed? Think about this particular moment: is there an aspect of the HIV/AIDS fight that's particularly timely?

What are your goals?

Think about what you would like to achieve with this event. If everything went off exactly as you hoped, what would be the result? As you set short-term goals, make sure that they are measurable, attainable and move towards a long-term goal. Even in planning a one-time event, it's often a good idea to consider how this event might fit into a more long-term strategy for your organization or community.

Who are you trying to target?

Think about your target audience. Who are the people in a position to shape whether or not that goal is attained? Of those people, who might you be able to reach most effectively? By focusing your efforts, you can make the most change with the least amount of work. Are you trying to reach out to a new segment of your community with whom you are not currently connected? Are you targeting a group that has very basic knowledge, or is already familiar with the topic?

What's the best way to reach your event's audience?

Now that you know who you're trying to talk to, the question becomes: how are you going to reach them? Think about where they usually get their information: what will make them perk up and pay attention? What kinds of information or messaging will they trust? Having speaker after speaker without room for discussion can be boring. On the other hand, creative approaches – theater, film, open discussions – can be very effective.

The Basics of Event Organizing!

Keeping it affordable

- Look for free space to host your event in churches, schools, meeting halls, community centers, theaters, or the offices of sympathetic organizations and partner organizations.
- Look for local businesses that might be able to sponsor the event. For example, if you explain the cause you are working toward, a restaurant or grocery store might be able to donate some refreshments, and a copy shop or printer might be able to print or design free fliers for you.
- Ask your friends for help. Maybe you know a friend of a friend who is a great graphic designer or someone who has a lot of contacts with prominent or wealthy local leaders.
- If local organizations or businesses do sponsor you, in exchange for their generosity, make sure you promote them, thanking them publicly during your event, and putting up signs and banners at the event with their name and logo. When you ask for free, “in-kind” donations, make sure you mention what opportunities there are to promote them, place their logo or mention them verbally at the event.
- Ask a larger organization to co-host the event; they may be able to print flyers, publicize, cover the cost of refreshments, and host the event for free! Be clear with your partners about expectations, timelines, rights and responsibilities.

Before your event

- Build connections with other groups: putting on an event collaboratively is a great way to get many people to attend and to share the work burden.
- Think about the people who you would like to come: how do they usually find out about events? Think about any incentives you could build into your event to ensure attendance, for example, if you can provide refreshments, or free condoms and lubricant, that can help attract participants. If you are having a debate or panel discussion at a school or university, speak to teachers to see if they will bring their classes, or offer extra credit for students who do attend.
- Publicize your event: Spread information about the event in as many ways as possible, such as: Facebook, Twitter, posters, fliers, newspapers, radio stations, public notice boards, email listserves, partner's websites.
- Personal recruitment is also a good way to increase attendance: each person organizing could take responsibility for making sure that 10 (or 15, or 20...) people attend.

- Be sure to invite community leaders, staff of local organizations, and the UN country offices if you are near them. A bit of online research for email addresses and phone numbers can help you connect with them! Use GYCA's online directory to make sure other GYCA members in your country know about your event.¹
- Tell GYCA staff about your event, so that we can help publicize too! Use our **FACEBOOK** page (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Global-Youth-Coalition-on-HIV/AIDS/96052352131>) to promote your event!

At the event

- Keep the event interesting and fun: try to have a variety of formats in presenting information (ie. discussion, music or movie, presentations).
- Document it! Make sure to get contact information from everyone who attends, if possible, so that you can follow up and invite them to other potential events and trainings. Be sure to do a head count! Let us know how many people attend, and if there is a good gender balance.
- Take photographs! Make sure there is good lighting, and take pictures of people in action (speaking, listening, etc) rather than people posing. Photos taken outside are much more visually enticing than pictures of people speaking at a podium. Write down a caption for each picture in case you forget later!
- Give people a way to take action and get further involved beyond the event. This could be writing a letter or calling a political figure about a specific policy or program, coming to a meeting, or helping plan another event. The important thing is to harness people's interest and excitement to build your work. If you need volunteers for your organization, now is the perfect time to recruit them!
- It's great if you can have some kind of "takeaway" for them: for example, a flyer with key information on HIV prevention, if that's your focus, or a notice of an upcoming event. That way, they're more likely to remember the message you're trying to convey.
- Get feedback! If possible, have participants fill out a short questionnaire. If it's a small group, you could make two lists at the close of the event: one list of things that went well, and another list of things to improve.

After the event

- Report back! Write a short report (1-2 pages) or article and **make sure to include pictures**. Please send your pictures as attachments in their original format (.jpg, .gif, .bmp) - do not put them into a Word document because that can decrease their quality and makes it impossible to use them in a report or on the website. Then email your report to worldaidsday@gyca.org. This is a great way to publicize your work and to help us publicize GYCA overall to partners, donors and potential new members!
- Use our Facebook page to share the success of your event with others! (<http://www.facebook.com/GlobalYouthHIV/AIDS>)
- Do an evaluation with the team of people who planned it, discussing what went well and what should be improved for next time.

¹ <http://www.youthaidscoalition.org/profiles.html>

Suggestions for World AIDS Day event planning

Before you organize any event, make sure to ask yourself the following questions:

- *What is the objective of the session?*
- *What is my target audience?*
- *How does it relate to World AIDS Day?*
- *What will be the implications of this event?*

Below, please find some details on organizing specific types of events: a peer education session, a concert or film showing, a panel and a rally or protest.

A peer education session

For planning, think about:

Where? College/university/school/workplace are great places to hold this kind of event, where you can teach peers about things they might not know on HIV and AIDS.

Who? Find someone who has run such sessions before and would be willing to volunteer his/her time to organize an interactive session.

How to make it fun? Make sure it's an interactive session; quizzes and games are some ways of doing this.

Example: A couple years ago, one GYCA member organized a session on the basics of HIV for a group of her friends in New York, some from work and some from university. For this event, she:

- Found a facilitator who was willing to volunteer his time to prepare the event;
- Found donated space from a faith-based organization;
- Ensured that the session was interactive - lots of questions and answers throughout;
- Started with a short quiz to understand how much knowledge the audience already had; and
- Distributed free products such as lubricants and condoms.

Be ready for:

- Shy people who will be afraid to ask questions! Games and team-oriented activities could help bring them out.
- Debates – depending on what you educate about, people might have different views on issues. Be ready to mediate and not exclude people with different views. Have resources available for reference just in case.
- If people are excited, what could be the follow up, if any?

A concert or film screening

For planning, figure out:

Where? A college, university, school, or a public park could be places to consider.

Who? For a concert – Organizing a concert typically requires a lot of resources, unless you have people you know who can perform and a substantial audience that will attend. It usually requires planning significantly in advance due to space limitations and the need to spread the word early enough. Think of the following questions:

- Who you invite to perform depends on the message you wish to convey – is it a group that sings about AIDS-related political/health/economic issues or is somehow tied with AIDS-related work?
- Do you want to use this event as a fundraiser? If so, how much would people pay and what would the money go to?

If you can find a well-known performer then you could use this as a fundraising/awareness-raising event by preparing the performer in advance to talk about HIV and perhaps combining the concert with a speaker or two.

Who/what? For a film screening – While possibly easier than a concert, it still requires thinking about who can attend and also requires advance planning due to space limitations. There are fantastic films about young people and HIV. Here are a few suggestions:

Transit – made by MTV International, this is a movie about young people and sexual health that takes place in five countries. It is very ‘real’, touching upon true-life situations. MTV will send you a FREE version of the DVD combined with a kit which guides you on how to facilitate a session to discuss the movie.

(<http://www.staying-alive.org/en/resources/>)

A Closer Walk – A film that needs to be bought but is very informative and moving. Note that it very long (about 3 hours) and we would recommend showing only certain parts you think would be interesting to your audience. (<http://www.acloserwalk.org/>)

A fuller list of movies about HIV can be found here: <http://aids.about.com/od/toptenlists/tp/movies.htm>

A panel discussion

For planning, figure out:

Who? University/school/campus and even workplace could be potential target audiences and environments that could hold a panel discussion.

Speakers? You need to first understand what messages you want to convey and then identify the most appropriate people for a discussion. If they are senior people such as professors or senior professionals/experts, you should book their time well in advance. Like any other event, this requires in-advance planning so start early!

Space? This will depend on your target audience. Think about how many people you are aiming for, and what spaces those people are often around.

How to make it not boring? Panel discussions can be boring if speakers just show a presentation, especially if it involves PowerPoint slides.

A **facilitator** or a **host**, who can ask questions and lead conversation among 3 or 4 speakers makes the session more interactive and diverse in terms of voices and items discussed.

Debates can be a lot of fun, especially if you involve the audience. One person could be the ‘expert’ on the topic, while a smaller group can come around that person and argue a particular position. Some common, controversial themes in HIV and AIDS work to debate might include:

- ABC approach to prevention vs. just A
- Should faith-based organizations be involved in HIV policy-making?
- If a pharmaceutical company offers sponsorship to your non-profit, should you accept?
- Should testing for HIV be mandatory during normal health check-ups?
- Should parents be present with young people under 16 (or 18) if they choose to do an HIV test?

- Should a positive person always disclose his/her status?
- Is protesting at major events related to HIV policy an effective way for policy change and reform?

Some resources are at: <http://www.secularstudents.org/node/1543>
http://www.ehow.com/how_2127952_organize-a-debate.html

Time limit - All speakers should have a time limit, as should debaters!

Things to avoid:

- people talking about themselves or their organizations without addressing the ‘So what’ question. Each speaker should tie his or her words to a unified point.
- people getting angry or intolerant, especially in a debate-like setting. Make sure that the rules are clear, and that people contain their voices and are respectful to each other.

Rally or protest

What are you trying to change? To make a protest effective, you need to have a specific policy you want changed, whether at a government level, at a hospital or at some other level.

Who is your target? Generally speaking, your target is the people who have the power to effect the change you want. Make sure you know who they are, and that every one who stops to look at your protest will be able to tell, too!

When and where? You have two main options here: either to do the protest where the target people are located (like their office or a public event they are attending), or somewhere where there are many people (i.e., a march through the market or shopping mall on a weekend afternoon). Of course, if you can do both at once, the better.

Messaging: Make sure your message is clear and brief. Display it on banners, signs, and/or t-shirts. Create flyers to hand out to passersby that explain the issue in a bit more detail and give them a clear action they can take to help support (for example, calling a government office). Make sure your flyers are clear, factual, and don’t have too much text on them.

Media: If your event is covered in a newspaper or on TV news, its impact can increase enormously, as many more people hear about the issue. Call the media ahead of time and send them a press release, so that they know to attend. Designate one or two people who are well informed and are good speakers as your “media spokespeople,” so that when the reporters ask to interview someone, all organizers know who the spokesperson is and can direct all media inquiries to that person.

Think creatively: Creative visuals go a long way towards getting public and media attention. For example, for one protest, HealthGap once constructed a giant backbone out of paper-mache and delivered it to politicians who they were trying to convince to stand their ground on an issue.

Laws: Every country has different laws about protests; in some countries, you may need to obtain a permit if you have more than a certain number of people or if you plan to march in the street. Make sure to check what your local laws are before you organize!

Media Tips: Getting the Word Out

Working with the media, be it newspaper, radio, TV stations, websites, social networking sites, or blogs is very important. They can publicize the event ahead of time, ensuring many more people attend, and when they report on the event after it happens, they can bring the message to those who were unable to attend. Below, find some tips to help you do this work effectively.

- Journalists don't want to do a lot of work, so make it easy for them to find the information they need. As you write your press release, think of it as writing the story for them, so that they don't have to.
- Do basic research on the most popular news outlets in your country and community, and their contact information. Try to contact the outlet that is used most by your target audience.
- Send out a **media advisory** (which is like a short version of a press release) about 3 to 7 days before the event. This should just give the basic information (answering the questions of “what, where, when, who, why” about the event), so the newspaper, radio station, or TV station can plan on sending a reporter.
- After you send the media advisory, **call** the people you sent it to, to remind them and see if they have any questions. Introduce yourself, remind them that you just sent an advisory about an upcoming event, invite them to cover your event, and keep your phone call short and precise.
- Make sure to put contact information (ideally, a mobile phone number and email) of who to contact for more information/press inquiries on everything you send out.
- Send out a press release (more details below!) the day before the event, and include more information than in the media advisory (usually a maximum of one page).
- It is important to get to know your local media. Building relationships with them will mean consistent coverage for your events. Follow up with them after the event; if appropriate, thank the reporter for covering your story.

Writing a press release

A good press release includes the following elements:

1. **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** These words should appear in the upper left-hand margin, just under your letterhead.
2. **Contact information:** Skip a line or two after “for immediate release” and list the name, daytime and evening telephone numbers, and e-mail address of **one** person who can best answer reporters’ questions. It is important to give your home or mobile number since reporters often work on deadlines and may not be available until after hours.
3. **Headline:** Skip two lines after your contact information and use a boldface type. The headline should be short and descriptive. It should express what action a reporter might make into a story.
4. **Dateline:** Open the first paragraph with the city your press release is issued from and the date you are sending out your release. You can find this format at the beginning of articles in most newspapers.
5. **Lead paragraph:** The first paragraph needs to grasp the reader’s attention and should contain the relevant information to your message such as the five W’s (who, what, when, where, why). Be sure to mention that your event is part of many events taking place internationally on the same day!
6. **Text:** The main body of your press release where your message should fully develop. In this portion, you write the story for the reporter. Your text should be a full (but concise—**one page is best**) news story about the event you are publicizing, including one or two **quotations** from people who are involved, and a more complete description of the

event and its background than you could fit into the lead paragraph. It is written as any news article would be written. Any opinion is expressed in quotes, not in the text.

7. **A note on photos:** Also, make sure to write "photographs of the event will be available- please contact _____," and then have someone there who is taking pictures. That way, if the newspaper can't send a photographer, then they still know they could get pictures.

8. **Remember:** A good press release is short and concise. Keep it under a page!

Working with the Community

GYCA constantly seeks to improve our ability to reach out to youth who do not have access to internet and other technologies. Many of these youth find themselves in rural communities, where it is very important to think about the best way to approach and work with existing community organizations and leaders.

Below are a few tips that can assist with community relations:

- Try as much as you can to pay courtesy calls on the leadership of the community, so that they feel involved in the event.
- Always enter a community through influential people in the community. They could be youth or adults: either way, they can offer good ideas, attract more people to attend, and increase the overall success of your event.
- Pay attention to the traditions and customs of the community. If you have disagreements, make sure to be respectful of community members' beliefs and talk in a way that promotes understanding, not argument.
- Organize meetings based on when people in the community are available; if you're not sure when that is, ask!
- If the community speaks a language that you do not speak, make sure that everything is translated, and that people who do speak the language are key in helping organize and run the event.
- Give credit to the community if they assist with your event.

About the Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS (GYCA)

As you organize your gathering, people attending will probably have questions about GYCA and how it can help them in their work. The information included below is meant to help answer their questions. Please take the opportunity to publicize GYCA and recruit new members at your World AIDS Day gathering!

GYCA is a youth-led global network of over 7,300 young leaders and adult allies working on youth and HIV/AIDS in more than 180 countries worldwide. GYCA's mission is to empower young leaders with the skills, knowledge, resources and opportunities they need to scale up HIV/AIDS interventions among their peers.

It was founded by a group of youth attendees of the XIV International AIDS Conference in Barcelona 2002 and XV International AIDS Conference in Bangkok 2004. GYCA's mission is to empower young leaders with the skills, knowledge, resources and opportunities they need to scale up HIV and AIDS interventions amongst their peers. Its work is guided by three priorities: networking and sharing of best practices; technical assistance and capacity building; and political advocacy. GYCA is a program of the Public Health Institute with staff based in New York City, USA, and Accra, Ghana.

What can GYCA offer YOU?

- **Connections:** Reach out to other young activists working on HIV and AIDS issues around the world and in your region to share ideas, experiences and best practices through our email lists and online profiles through our partner site, an online social networking community, TakingITGlobal.
- **Access to resources:** GYCA regularly shares access to grants, scholarships, training and educational opportunities, job vacancies, events, campaigns, research articles, and publications with its members.
- **Free educational e-courses:** GYCA offers three free online courses, Project Management, Political Advocacy and Grant Proposal Writing & Fundraising, which can help you gain new skills to carry out your work. Students submit weekly exercises for review by the course facilitator, participate in online discussions, create a final project or campaign and implement it with technical support from GYCA staff. Keep your eye on the GYCA homepage to find out when we're accepting applications!
- **Local events and trainings:** Staff, Regional and National Focal Points, and other GYCA members organize events and trainings around the world. And we can help you organize your own local gathering or training.
- **Opportunities to participate:** GYCA assists young people to participate in international events and consultations as speakers, scholarship recipients, members of government delegations, abstract presenters and delegates.
- **Ways to promote your work:** International organizations and donors have used our Global Directory to identify good projects and individuals all over the world. We showcase the good work of our members through our newsletter, on our website, and at international events.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE GLOBAL YOUTH COALITION ON HIV/AIDS IS UNABLE TO OFFER FUNDING FOR WORLD AIDS DAY 2012 EVENTS.

Questions? Email worldaidsday@gyca.org

To learn more and to join the Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS, please visit our website at www.GYCA.org, "Like" us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GlobalYouthHIVAIDS, and follow us on Twitter @_GYCA_.