



World AIDS Day  
December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007  
Youth Leadership

An Event Organizing Kit

For World AIDS Day 2008, GYCA is partnering again with World AIDS Campaign to coordinate youth-led World AIDS Day events worldwide.

This year's theme is leadership: which gives you an opportunity to highlight youth leadership through a wide range of possible activities in your community. Last year, GYCA mobilized its powerful network and members organized 50 events in 30 countries.<sup>1</sup> This year, we are hoping to target more youth in more countries to "Take the Lead" in ending the spread of HIV!

Focusing on our theme of leadership, 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 kit, together with the enclosed materials from World AIDS Campaign, will help make your event a success!

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## Why Youth Leadership?

- With over half of new HIV infections each year (2.5 million infections) occurring among young people under 25, youth leadership is an urgent need in all countries!
- Given the alarming levels of HIV infection among young people, it is key to take advantage of the knowledge, skills and ideas that young people bring to the table.
- Young people need to take the lead in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes that affect their lives. Involving young people improves their knowledge and skills, by empowering them to take initiative and gain self-confidence.
- Provided with support and training, young people can be the best advocates for their sexual and reproductive health needs, and provide policy makers and programme managers with much-needed youth perspectives. This, in turn, makes programmes and policies more sustainable, relevant and effective!
- Youth leaders must work in partnership with adult leaders, who have the responsibility to make youth HIV and AIDS issues their priority.

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<sup>1</sup> View the WAD2006 Report at [www.youthaidscoalition.org/resources.html](http://www.youthaidscoalition.org/resources.html)

## 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 to think about what kind of event will best accomplish your goals. Start early! A good event takes at least two months 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? For young people, having adult speaker after speaker without room for discussion is boring. On the other hand, creative approaches— theatre, film, open discussions – can be very effective.

## 101 on 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 make free fliers for you.
- 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.

- 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.

#### 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, such as class credit for students, free food, or skills-building.
- Publicize your event: Spread information about the event in as many ways as possible; posters, fliers, newspapers, radio stations, public notice boards, email list serves, 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 by to them. A bit of online research can help you connect with them! Use GYCA's online directory to make sure other GYCA members in your country know about your event.<sup>2</sup>
- Tell GYCA staff about your event in advance, so that we can help publicize too!

#### At the event

- Keep the event interesting and fun: try to have a variety of formats in presenting information (for example, discussion, music or movie, presentations.)
- Document it! Make sure to get contact information for 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. Write down a caption for each pic 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. Then send it to Aleza (aleza@youthaidscoalition.org), and keep a copy for your records.
- Do an evaluation with the team of people who planned it, discussing what went well and what should be improved for next time.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.youthaidscoalition.org/profiles.html>

## 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 inquires 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: (For examples of press releases, please see the action kits available for download at [www.fightglobalaids.org](http://www.fightglobalaids.org), or email [aleza@youthcoalition.org](mailto:aleza@youthcoalition.org) for additional advice.)

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 the person who can best answer reporters’ questions. It is important to give your home 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 quotations from people who are involved and a more complete description of the event and its background than you could fit into the more exclusive 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 are available- to get them, 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! Also, please send Aleza (aleza@youthaidscoalition.org) your media materials!

## 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 to best 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 network of over 3000 young leaders and adult allies working to end the spread of HIV and AIDS in 150 countries worldwide. GYCA was initiated by young participants of the Barcelona and Bangkok International AIDS Conferences in 2002 and 2004, and is primarily supported by UNFPA and UNAIDS. GYCA creates opportunities for meaningful participation of young people all over the world in decision-making that affects their lives.

Please visit us at <http://www.youthaidscoalition.org> to learn more and to join the Coalition.

### What can GYCA offer YOU?

- **Connections:** Reach out to other young activists working on HIV/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.
- **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 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 organize events and trainings around the world.
- **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, at international events.
- **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.