

**You Have a Voice-
Make it Heard!**

HIV/AIDS
Community Mobilization Kit

This kit has been developed by:

**GLOBAL CITIZENS
FOR CHANGE**

A project of Canada's international volunteer cooperation agencies

**CITOYENNES
DU MONDE
EN ACTION**

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**GLOBAL
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Introduction

The number of people living with HIV/AIDS continues to rise. More than 40 million people worldwide are living with HIV/AIDS. This year alone, more than five million people will be infected. Ninety-five per cent of these people live in the global South.

During the International AIDS Conference in Toronto this past August, media from around the world focused on Canada and our role in fighting the pandemic. Citizens across the country echoed the conference's theme, "Time to Deliver", in events held in local communities and in the national media.

On August 18th, the day the conference closed, Health Minister Tony Clement promised the Government would act. He said: "Is there more to do? Yes there is and we'll be announcing that in the near future."

Since that day, close to 750,000 people have died of AIDS-related causes and more than a million women, men and children have become infected with HIV/AIDS.

Yet the Canadian government remains silent.

It has been three months since the conference and the Government of Canada has yet to announce its plans to combat the pandemic.

Citizens across the country are raising their voice in the fight against the pandemic. We've delivered thousands of e-mail messages and postcards to Mr. Harper calling on Canada to resume its role as a leader in global fight against AIDS by taking decisive action. As the government prepares for an upcoming budget and possibly a federal election, we need to increase our efforts and let our leaders know Canadians care and want their government to act.

This Community Mobilization Kit is a starting point — a place where you can find out about the issue of HIV/AIDS, what Canada is doing to combat the epidemic, the four step platform that has been developed by the Global Treatment Access Group (GTAG), and some suggested activities that you can do in your local community to help in the fight against AIDS.

We encourage you to speak to other people in your community and generate your own ideas about how you can get your community and your government to act to improve the lives of those living with HIV/AIDS and to move towards an end to this pandemic.

As citizens and residents of Canada, we have the opportunity to get our country to do something great. As you read this you may just be one person, but as Margaret Mead famously said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has."

The Global AIDS Crisis: A Health Emergency, a Development Disaster, and a Human Rights Crisis

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is an incurable but preventable disease. It is caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which is transmitted through sexual relations with an infected person, transfusions of infected blood, use of contaminated needles and syringes and from mother to child through pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding. HIV damages the body's defence system by disabling certain white blood cells that fight infection. All people are at risk for HIV and AIDS.

More than 33 million people have died since AIDS was first named in 1981, but there have been great inroads into treating and controlling the disease. Although there continues to be under-served groups – such as Aboriginal peoples and intravenous drug users - in general, people living with HIV/AIDS in rich industrialized countries are living longer because of access to antiretroviral (ARV) drugs that prolong life, as well as clean water, better nutrition, and well-funded health care systems.

For people living with HIV/AIDS in developing countries, the situation is quite different. Countries burdened by poverty, crippling debt, weak and under-resourced, public health infrastructures, and insufficient access to clean water and medical resources, life expectancy for people living with AIDS is much lower.

In 2005, 1.5% of HIV-positive North Americans died due to AIDS compared to nearly 10% of Africans with HIV.

The AIDS pandemic is reversing development gains in many countries and undermining their capacity to meet the needs of their citizens. AIDS is exacerbating poverty and poverty is fuelling the spread of the pandemic. The economic impact is severe. In many countries, an entire generation of people are dying in their most productive years, contributing to massive shortages of health care workers, teachers and other professionals needed to effectively address the pandemic.

Stigma associated with the illness is also contributing to its spread. Many people with AIDS experience discrimination and the denial of human rights, particularly women and girls. Gender inequality puts women and girls at greater risk of contracting HIV, and also hinders their access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.

Where there are high HIV prevalence rates there are high debts. Sub-Saharan Africa is doubly burdened. On this continent, where prevalence rates are the highest, countries also have heavy external debts. Debt service payments and adherence to the conditions laid down by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank constitute severe obstacles to the provision of life-saving health care and educational services needed to combat the AIDS epidemic.

Canada's contribution:

Canada has been a leader in the fight against AIDS and it can be again.

At the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS in 2001, Canada championed human rights and called for language that named vulnerable groups including men who have sex with men, sex workers, prisoners and intravenous drug users as well as women and girls.

Prevention: In 2002 Canada announced a \$50 million contribution to support international AIDS vaccine research over five years; in 2005, Canada made a further contribution of \$12 million to this effort. In 2004, Canada provided \$15 million to support microbicide research over 3 years. Given the cost of conducting clinical trials, it is expected that funding for both vaccines and microbicides will need to be scaled up substantially in the years to come. In June 2005, the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI) estimates that there is a funding gap for AIDS vaccine research and development of about \$345-395 million a year, over and above current and recently announced spending. In July 2005 the International Partnership for Microbicides, the Alliance for Microbicide Development and the Global Campaign for Microbicides called on G8 leaders to double funding for microbicide development to a minimum of \$280 million per year. Canada needs to ensure it sustains its support for science that will develop these urgently needed HIV prevention tools.

Treatment: In 2004 Canada committed \$100 million to the World Health Organization's "3 by 5" initiative, about one-third of the estimated need. Although the WHO initiative fell short of its goal to provide three million people living with HIV/AIDS in low- and middle-income countries with life-prolonging antiretroviral treatment (ARV) by the end of 2005, it did demonstrate the feasibility of administering these drugs in resource limited settings.

Canada's Access to Medicines Regime (the *Jean Chrétien Pledge to Africa* law):

Canada has set an important international precedent by being the first country to pass legislation that should enable the export of lower-cost medicines needed by developing countries to address public health needs. In principle, the 2004 law — known as the *Jean Chrétien Pledge to Africa* but now referred to by the government as "Canada's Access to Medicines Regime" — permits the issuing of "compulsory licences" to generic drug manufacturers that override patents so that less expensive, generic medicines can be produced and exported to developing countries.

But the red tape and bureaucracy created by the legislation continue to prevent medicines from getting to those who need it. Not a single pill has yet been exported under this law. While the law has set a positive precedent by clearly defining the royalties that must be paid to patent-holders in the case of compulsory licenses, something left vague in the rules of the World Trade Organization on drug patents. This feature of Canada's regime can and should be preserved. But the legislation must be overhauled to streamline the process for issuing licenses so generic manufacturers can supply developing countries with needed medicines. Unless the law is more "user-friendly" for developing countries and generic drug suppliers, it will not deliver on the pledge.

What Needs to Happen

Canada has, in the past, taken steps in the right direction and made important contributions. But there is more we can and should do in the face of the greatest public health crisis in history.

It is estimated that in 2004 spending on HIV/AIDS interventions in 135 low and middle income countries reached US\$6.1 billion. This is a significant improvement over 2001 spending levels of \$2.1 billion, but still far below what is needed. UNAIDS estimates that US\$18.1 billion is required in 2007, and US\$22.1 billion in 2008, to combat the pandemic.

Canadian funding for international HIV/AIDS efforts reached \$189 million in 2004, which represents about 3.1% of the global resources currently available for HIV/AIDS. This includes bilateral funding (i.e., directly from Canada to developing country projects and programs), as well as contributions to multilateral initiatives such as the World Health Organization's "3 by 5" Initiative, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative, and the International Partnership for Microbicides.

We are calling on Canada to contribute about 5% of the resource requirements of the Global Fund. The crisis is immense and this percentage is well in line with the level of funding Canada gives to other multilateral funding mechanisms such as International Fund for Agriculture Development and the Global Environment Facility.

While Canada's legislation on exporting more affordable generic drugs was an important step, it has not yet been effective. The legislation is far too complicated and rigid; it must be amended if it is ever to deliver on the promise. The law passed unanimously in Parliament in 2004; all parties should demonstrate their genuine commitment to patients in developing countries by fixing it so that it will work.

The Need to Increase Aid

The fight against HIV/AIDS needs to be seen in a much larger context, one that includes efforts to improve health, to eradicate poverty and hunger, to improve access to education, and to promote gender equality and human rights. Investment in the fight against AIDS must be accompanied by investment in the development of the world's poorest countries.

Therefore, in addition to funding HIV/AIDS-specific interventions through NGOs and through bilateral and multilateral mechanisms, there is also a need to increase overall aid funding to address urgent social sector priorities, including support for health care systems that have been chronically neglected or even undermined by ill-considered policies of privatization and ceilings on health spending. In many low-income countries, healthcare infrastructures need to be updated, new diagnostic equipment purchased and installed, and delivery systems for drugs and other health supplies improved, while health care personnel need to be trained and retained in countries facing an overwhelming need for their services.

Provincial health authorities in Canada contribute to the problem by recruiting health workers from high prevalence countries instead of adopting training and retention strategies to meet their own needs. The Federal government also has a role to play in addressing the "brain drain" problem by compensating the countries that lose health professionals and addressing the obstacles for underemployed health professionals driving taxis in Canadian cities.

There is a link between the needs that are specific to HIV/AIDS and broader development priorities. The Make Poverty History campaign is calling for all developed countries to set a timetable as to when they will increase aid to the level of 0.7% of gross national income (GNI), a level agreed to at the United Nations in 1971 and repeatedly promised by all countries over the decades since, including in the UN's Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS adopted over five years ago in 2001. Several countries have set firm deadlines for reaching this target. Belgium and Finland have committed to reaching this target by 2010, France and Spain by 2012 and Britain by 2013. However, Canada has not yet established a firm timetable.

The GTAG Platform — *The Global AIDS Crisis: Four Steps for Canada*

The Global Treatment Access Group (GTAG) is a working group of Canadian international development, human rights, humanitarian, and AIDS service organizations, trade unions, student groups, and faith-based groups seeking to improve access to essential medicines and other aspects of HIV prevention and care, treatment and support for people living with HIV/AIDS in developing countries.

In August 2006, just before the XVI International AIDS Conference in Toronto, GTAG launched a four-point plan of action for Canada to do its part in fighting AIDS globally. That civil society platform provides a basis for communities and individuals to mobilize across the country in demanding action.

Canadian civil society is calling on the Canadian government to do the following:

- **Pay our fair share of prevention and treatment in developing countries.**
- **Invest in the public health care systems of developing countries.**
- **Cancel the debts of developing countries to free up resources to fight AIDS and poverty.**
- **Follow through on commitments to make medicines affordable to developing countries.**

HIV/AIDS Treatment and Prevention: Four Steps to Universal Access

1. Pay our fair share

Canada must contribute its fair share to cover the cost of HIV prevention, care, treatment and support programs to address HIV/AIDS in Canada and around the world. UNAIDS estimates that US\$18.1 billion is required in 2007, and \$22.1 billion in 2008, to combat the pandemic. Canada's response should be comprehensive, supporting HIV/AIDS through a range of civil society, bilateral and multilateral mechanisms.

We call on Canada to:

- Double financial support for domestic and international research and development of new HIV prevention technologies, such as microbicides and vaccines, which are of particular importance in addressing women's heightened vulnerability to infection.
- Contribute 5% of the resource requirements of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, the most important multilateral mechanism for scaling up HIV prevention, care treatment and support, over each of the next five years.
- Announce a timetable for raising Canada's development assistance to the long-promised target of 0.7% of gross national income, as other countries have.

2. Invest in public health care systems

An essential prerequisite for improving health and fighting disease is a functioning public, not-for-profit health care system. Crumbling infrastructure, chronic under-financing, workforce attrition, and migration of health care workers have eroded health systems in many developing countries, even as the burden of disease has increased.

The lack of trained health care workers, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, due in part to recruitment by rich countries including Canada, is undermining developing countries' capacity to prevent infection and to treat and care for their people.

We call on Canada to:

- Provide development assistance for public health care systems in developing countries to sustain HIV treatment and prevention.
- Support greater retention of health care workers in developing countries by providing development assistance for training opportunities and improved wages, benefits and working conditions.
- Work with provincial governments, universities, health care institutions, associations of health professionals and health worker unions to invest in training and retention of personnel in Canada and to discourage active recruitment of health professionals from developing countries.
- Work with other countries and international organizations to implement migration and recruitment policies that mutually benefit source and destination countries.

3. Cancel the debt

On average, African governments spend three times as much per capita on servicing their debt than they do on health care. Of the ten countries with the highest levels of HIV infection, only two – Zambia and Mozambique – will benefit initially from the debt relief plan promised by the G8 in 2005. By mid-2006, the plan will remove only 13% of the debts of the 60 countries most burdened by AIDS, debt and poverty.

What's more, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank impose strict conditions on governments seeking loans or debt relief, such as forced privatization, user fees for public services and limits on the hiring of health care workers, raising serious obstacles to their efforts to control the AIDS pandemic.

We call on Canada to:

- Promote the immediate and unconditional cancellation of 100% of the multilateral and bilateral debt owed by countries burdened by AIDS, debt and poverty.

- Ensure that debt cancellation is not conditional on requirements that hinder the fight against poverty and the pandemic.

4. Make medicines affordable

The price of patented medicines is a major obstacle to achieving universal treatment, including urgently needed fixed-dose combinations and paediatric formulations of HIV/AIDS drugs.

In 2004, Parliament unanimously passed the *Jean Chrétien Pledge to Africa Act* to help developing countries obtain more affordable generic medicines from Canadian manufacturers. Though the law came into effect in May 2005, not a single generic drug has yet left Canada as a result of the legislation.

Disincentives built into the legislation have discouraged Canadian generic companies and developing countries from using the law. In the absence of concerted efforts by generic manufacturers and the federal government, there will be little concrete benefit to report when Parliament reviews the legislation in 2007.

We call on Canada to:

- Promote, in developing countries, the opportunity to obtain more affordable medicines from Canadian generic manufacturers.
- Broker exploratory meetings between Canadian generic manufacturers and health ministries in developing countries.
- Remove unnecessary red tape that dissuades generic drug manufacturers and developing countries from using the legislation.

We call on the generic drug industry in Canada to:

- Seek opportunities to export generic medicines to developing countries.
- Collaborate with developing country health ministries and NGOs in identifying medicines Canadian generic manufacturers can produce.
- Make special efforts to develop fixed-dose combinations and paediatric formulations of HIV/AIDS drugs.

Keeping the Promise

The steps outlined in this Plan for Action would ensure Canada does its part to fulfill the G8's pledge of a comprehensive response to HIV/AIDS with the goal of achieving universal access to treatment by 2010. Canada should encourage the same of all G8 members by establishing a review committee at this year's summit in St. Petersburg to provide ongoing follow-up.

What you can do in your community

The size and scope of the AIDS pandemic can seem overwhelming. You may think to yourself, I am just one person – what can I do?

You have a voice.

As a constituent you have a great deal of opportunity to mobilize your community, and policy-makers to support the GTAG platform to:

- **Pay our fair share of prevention and treatment in developing countries.**
- **Invest in the public health care systems of developing countries.**
- **Cancel the debts of developing countries to free up resources to fight AIDS and poverty.**
- **Follow through on commitments to make medicines affordable to developing countries.**

Get Started.....

What you can do:

Get Heard - Connect with your Member of Parliament and the Prime Minister.

What you achieve:

By meeting with policy makers you go directly to the people who can effect change. As a voting constituent in their riding, your MP will want to know about issues that are important to you and what concerns he or she should be representing in shaping government policies and commitments.

Get Writing - Write a letter to the editor to your community newspaper.

What you achieve:

Getting published in your community paper lets others at the local level learn about the issue and what they can do. It also makes it more likely that your MP will hear from other constituents about these concerns.

Get Speaking – Contact your local radio station and see if there is an opportunity to talk about the issue of HIV/AIDS on air.

What you achieve:

The radio is a great place to have information heard, and may give you access to a very diverse audience.

Get Others to Act - Organize a “lunch-and-learn”, do a presentation in your community, organize a discussion with your book club, host a solidarity event by connecting with other groups in your area who have been active in the Make Poverty History campaign (or ones like it) and generate an event together, such a booth to solicit signatures on a petition or postcards, a public forum, or a night of music or other entertainment to raise funds and awareness about the AIDS crisis globally and here at home.

What you achieve:

By connecting with others in your community you begin to build an informed constituency in your area. By asking that constituency to act you help get the government to act, on behalf of Canadians, to do its part in fighting the global AIDS pandemic.

Get Connected - Contact a group in your community who is working on HIV/AIDS issues (in Canada or abroad). Find out what you can do to support their efforts, or perhaps partner with them in organizing and hosting an event

What you achieve:

By connecting with other groups in your community you expand the local advocacy that is already underway.

Get Heard

Connect with your Member of Parliament

It may sound a bit intimidating, but speaking as a constituent to your local MP is an effective and simple way to get your concerns heard. Keep in mind that your MP works for you. This approach can be particularly effective when constituents across the country are delivering the same messages.

Meet:

General Tips:

- Make sure you provide a clear way for your MP to act by making a specific request
- Listen well
- Don't be disappointed if the MP is not immediately supportive. Hearing his or her views and justification of a position is valuable for the campaign and will inform future strategy. He or she may come around in the future.
- Always be polite and respectful. Your MP's opinion on an issue may change, but a bad impression lasts a long time and will make him or her less open to supporting policies or actions that you would like to see.

Don't feel intimidated, or that you need to be an expert. If your message is that as a constituent you care about the issue and want the Canadian government to be a world leader in the fight against AIDS, this will have an impact!

Steps to take to meet with your MP

Identify Your MP

- If you don't know who your MP is, visit www.elections.ca, click the language of your choice, and then enter your postal code. Click "for more information" under the MP's name to get the phone number and address for his or her local office.

Call the MP

- Call the MP's local office, and ask if you can have 30 minutes of his or her time to discuss the issue of Canada's role in the global response to HIV/AIDS.
- Suggest days that you would be available for a meeting.
- Keep a friendly tone.
- Use everyday language in explaining your issue.
- Be careful not to assume that the MP, or the MP's assistant, knows the issue.

Prepare for the meeting

- Know your MP. Check out his or her website and latest printed materials. Look on his or her party's website or printed materials to see if the party (or other members of that party) have taken supportive positions on these issues. (For example, the federal New Democratic Party has endorsed the four points of the GTAG platform as party policy.)
- Find out if the MP has met or been involved with similar organizations before on this or related issues. What was the outcome? Has he or she ever spoken publicly about this issue? What Parliamentary committees do they sit on? (You can see what committees he or she sits on now, or has sat on in the past, by looking at the MP's page on the Parliament of Canada website. Go to www.parl.gc.ca, click on "Members of Parliament (Current)" on the home page and then click on the name of your MP.)
- Based on what you know about this MP, gauge who he or she is most likely to listen to. A community or business leader? A volunteer? An academic? Can you enlist someone like this as a fellow spokespersons?
- If possible, choose a delegation of 2-3 people – make sure one is a constituent and ensure you are on the same page about the message and goals of the meeting.

- Decide in advance who will take the lead in the meeting and make sure everyone has a role.
- Brainstorm what kind of questions might be raised and prepare answers. The information in this kit will be useful for this.
- Plan for different possible outcomes/responses to the meeting.
- Set a clear, achievable goal for the meeting.
- Send the platform, *The Global AIDS Crisis: Four Steps for Canada*, as background material beforehand to the MP; take another copy for the MP with you to the meeting (and don't assume they have necessarily read it).
- Dress appropriately – showing respect increases trust.

The Meeting

- A typical meeting lasts about 30 minutes. This time will go by very quickly. Prepare to do a lot of listening, while making sure you get your points across before the meeting is over. As a general rule, the MP should talk two-thirds of the time, you one-third.
- Arrive on time. It sounds elementary, but arriving late leaves a bad impression.
- State your case precisely, in everyday language.
- Give examples, and if appropriate, draw from your own experiences.
- Keep a positive tone – actively listen, show interest in their point of view, even if you disagree with it (politely).
- Keep the discussion on track – summarize progress, and have talking points handy to move the meeting along if it gets sidetracked.
- Have answers to difficult questions on hand and deal with them confidently. Don't bluff. If you don't know the answer, tell the MP you will get back to him or her.
- Do not ask people to do what they are unable to – it may lead to unnecessary frustration on both sides.
- Use effective transitions:
 - "I see things differently." (respectful, but firm)
 - "Let me provide you with some context." (needed perspective)
 - "That would be speculation. What I can tell you is that..." (only speak about what you know)
 - "That's true. However, what you have to keep in mind is..." (polite yet direct)
 - "I don't know – that's not my area of expertise. What I do know is that..." (gets you back on track)
- "Before we wrap up, I'd like to emphasize that..." (solidify your point)
- Check and record what the MP has agreed to do, if anything, before leaving.

The Ask

- Make clear your goals and what action you'd like to see the MP take, to support the following four points in the GTAG platform:
 - **Pay our fair share of prevention and treatment in developing countries.**
 - **Invest in the public health care systems of developing countries.**
 - **Cancel the debts of developing countries to free up resources to fight AIDS and poverty.**
 - **Follow through on commitments to make medicines affordable to developing countries.**

If you feel more comfortable talking about one of the issues you can highlight one or two issues, and ask for an action specifically on that point of the platform. If you are meeting with your MP before the federal government announces its budget you may want to focus on the point about "paying our fair share". Similarly, the current government has publicly stated that it will review Canada's law on exporting lower-cost generic drugs to countries that need them, so this should also be on the MP's agenda.

Governing Party:

If your MP is a member of the party in power you will want to ask him or her to do one of the following things:

- Raise the issue with colleagues in Caucus
- Write to the Minister of Finance, Minister of International Co-operation, Minister of Health, and/or the Minister of Industry about one or all of the four points in the platform
- Write the Prime Minister

Opposition Party Members:

If your MP is a member of one of the opposition parties, you will want to ask him or her to:

- Raise the issue with colleagues in Caucus
- Ask a question of the government in the House of Commons during Question Period.
- Write the Prime Minister or relevant Minister (see above) about one or all of the four points in the platform.

Note : The NDP has endorsed the Four Steps for Canada – if you live in an NDP riding you should still connect with your MP, and let them know that as a constituent you also support it – it is just as important to congratulate your MP for representing you well as it is to challenge them on issues you disagree with.

Follow-up

- Write a letter thanking the MP for the meeting. Remind him or her of the things s/he agreed to do (if any).

Writing to your Member of Parliament

Writing is another way you may want to connect with your MP and the Prime Minister. Letters are not always as effective as a face-to-face meeting but your letter will get read, and if an elected official receives enough of them, it can have a great impact.

When writing to a political representative:

- Use the correct address and greeting. The Prime Minister should be addressed as “The Right Honourable [name]”. A Member of Parliament is addressed as “The Honourable [name]”.
- Type the letter.
- Use your own words and stationery. Personal letters hold a lot more weight than form letters (although you can certainly be guided by the language and points in a form letter if you have one).
- Be brief and focused.
- Ask them to do something - See “The Ask” Section on the above about what you should ask the different member of the governing and opposition parties what to do.

Get Writing:

Writing a letter to the editor to your community newspaper.

What is a letter to the editor?

A letter you write to your community newspaper commenting on current news stories. Letters to the editor appear on the Opinion / Editorial (op-ed) pages and are one of the most highly read sections of the paper.¹

Steps to writing a letter to the editor:

- Focus on your local and regional papers. The idea is to get your community to recognize that the issue of HIV/AIDS policy can be a community issue.
- Read other letters to the editor in your local paper. Take note of the length and tone of the letters your paper runs. The general rule is: keep it short and to the point.
- Use accessible language. Not every reader will be familiar with your topic, so be sure to use terms that everyone can understand. Don't use acronyms (except for HIV and AIDS, which will be widely understood).
- Try to give your comments a personal angle. People respond best to human stories, accounts and comments. If you have volunteered overseas, be sure to mention your own experiences to support what you are trying to say.
- Keep in mind that you are reflecting communities and people around the world. Be sure to be sensitive, and thoughtful with your language and anecdotes.
- Sign the letter. Make sure you sign the letter and provide the paper with your name, address and a telephone number and/or email address. Without this information, they will usually not even consider publishing it.

¹ Some text for this section has been taken from IMPACS web-based Media Communications toolkit. For more tips, see www.impacs.org

Get Others to Act:

Organize a “lunch-and-learn” — Do a presentation in your community — Organize an event

Building understanding about HIV/AIDS among others in your community is a basic step in getting others to pressure the government around policy. There are lots of ways you can build awareness — organizing a talk at a coffee shop or a public forum in the evening, doing a “lunch and learn” at work, or hosting a discussion at your book club are just a few.

You will want to make sure that you give people the opportunity to act on the information you have given. Ask the participants in your group to call or write their Member of Parliament to ask for support for the “Four Steps for Canada” called for in the GTAG platform. You may want to bring photocopies of the platform, and hand them out along with your local MP’s Address. We have a limited number of postcards that include the four asks – so please contact gharding@cciorq.ca if you are interested in handing some out at your event.

Some ideas to get others involved:

Organize a book club

Host a book club to read and discuss Race Against Time (2005) by Stephen Lewis. Move your club into action by spending the last half hour of your meeting with each member of the club writing your local MP. For extra impact you may also want to send your MP the book.

Organize a lunch-and-learn at work or in your community

Get your work place involved by hosting a lunch and learn. Have your colleagues join you for a pot luck, or simple lunch and do a brief presentation on HIV/AIDS. If you have worked overseas you will want to bring in some of your own experiences. There are also plenty of opportunities to do a presentation in your community to get others informed about HIV/AIDS. Don’t be shy. Committee groups are often looking for speakers about current events. We can provide you with a Power Point presentation and speaker’s notes.

Some places to look for speaking opportunities:

- faith groups
- community clubs (Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis etc)
- schools
- coffee shops
- Ask your friends and family if they have suggestions or connections to a group you could talk with.

Organize a ‘Movies that Matter’ night

See if there are any other groups or theatres in your community that have independent or socially conscious film screenings and ask if they would show a film about HIV/AIDS. You may want to say a few things when the film is done, or invite the viewers to meet at a coffee shop to talk about the film. Make sure to have copies of the GTAG platform [and postcards], and perhaps other information about HIV/AIDS, available at the film screening and for distribution to people that attend.

Organize an Event in Solidarity

Connecting with other active groups in your community is a great way to make connections. See if you can work in your community to wrap a building or community structure (e.g., a statue) in white to build awareness about the link between issues of poverty and HIV/AIDS.

Get Speaking

Connect with a local radio station and look for opportunities to talk on air

Focus on community radio stations that have a mandate for discussing social and political issues (i.e., more than just a music station).

Identify a particular radio show that might be interested in the issues you can discuss, and make an effort to connect directly with the host of that show. (In the case of smaller radio stations, hosts often do all of their guest bookings.) If you cannot get in touch with the host, contact the director of programming for the station.

Some Tips for a radio interview:

- Listen to other interviews broadcast on that radio station.
- Use plain language – be sure to stay away from acronyms and jargon.
- Give your comments a personal angle. Tell a story, use names and give details some about people so that the AIDS crisis is not just numbers.
- Keep your message simple. Try not to get into all the complexity of the issues identified in the GTAG platform. Keep it general and understandable. The background and explanations given in the GTAG platform and in this kit should help with this.
- Ask the host what sort of questions they may ask so you can think about them in advance.
- Arrive prepared with some basic facts about the issue and a few key points. But do not prepare a speech or rehearsed answers; it will be obvious if you are just reading your comments, and it will not be as effective.
- Don't bluff or make things up. If you don't know the answer to a question posed by the host, you can say "I'm not able to comment on that, but I can tell you....", to bring the discussion back to your point(s).
- Provide people with a means to get more information:
 - www.aidslaw.ca/gtag
 - www.globalcitizensforchange.ca
 - www.makepovertyhistory.ca
- Relax and be yourself!

Get Connected

Find out what HIV/AIDS agencies are doing in your community

Research HIV/AIDS organizations in your area to find out what sort of volunteering and outreach opportunities are available. Much of this information can be found on the Web, in the phone book, or at a community centre.

You may want to propose an activity that you would like to organize to draw attention to the work that the organization is doing locally and connect the local actions to the global response to HIV/AIDS.

If you are in an area with a number of organizations that work on local HIV/AIDS issues, or organizations that work on issues of poverty and development, you may want to propose a joint event that would tie the work of the different organizations together, and make the public more aware of the connection between AIDS, poverty and development issues.

Remember that many of the organizations you will connect with will be working at full capacity, and it may be difficult for them to offer your event many resources. Try to be conscious of this when you are planning the type of event you may want to host, and be realistic about what the scope of the event will be.

Some places to help you find HIV/AIDS organizations in your community:

http://icad-cisd.com/content/membership_list.cfm?lang=e

http://aidslaw.ca/EN/about_us/who_we_are/members.htm

Cdn AIDS Society

<http://www.cdnaids.ca/office/membersnew.nsf/members!Openview&language=english>

and Cocqsida

<http://www.cocqsida.com/>