



I am living my rights.  
Stop AIDS. Keep the promise.

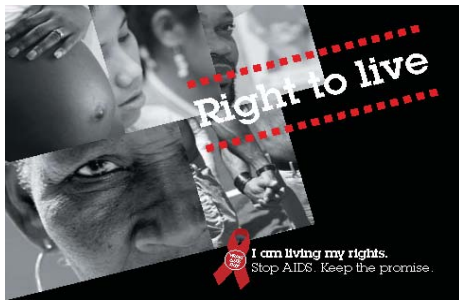
Access for all to HIV prevention, treatment, care  
and support is a critical part of human rights.

# World AIDS Day Media Toolkit

I am getting  
treatment

Tips and Resources to get your World  
AIDS Day messages out through the  
media














## World AIDS Day Media Toolkit

Tips and resources to get your World AIDS Day messages out through the media!

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## Universal Access and Human Rights



### Introduction

World AIDS Day, 1 December, is one of the most recognised international health days and a key opportunity to raise further awareness in communities and across the world about the state of the pandemic and critical next steps that must be taken to halt the spread. To make your events as effective as possible, and to get your message out as widely as possible, start planning now.

This guide will help you make more effective use of the media as you plan your events. Use it and adapt it to your own context – and send us any feedback on what worked best for you and any new tips you’d like to add to this resource. Send comments and suggestions to [media@worldaidscampaign.org](mailto:media@worldaidscampaign.org)

### Understanding the media is and what it is does

When we say “media”, what do we mean?

For our purposes, when we talk about media, we are talking about the broad range of news media that includes newspapers and magazines, television, radio and internet news. The geographical reach of the media is one of the main determining factors of their coverage – whether they focus on local issues, have a national audience, or broadcast internationally.

Understanding what gets covered

Some people remark that overall, many media seem to be covering HIV and AIDS issues less than in the past. That should not surprise us, when we understand that “news” essentially covers what is “new”. Repeated messages, for instance, that governments are not doing enough, that more money is needed, that AIDS continues to devastate the lives of millions of people – as true as it is – will not alone make news.

We have to be able to sharpen our messages and get them out in new and compelling ways that capture media interest.

Basically, news is made for what it says, who says it, or how it is said – and preferably all three. Here are some ways to generate media interest:

- Provide new facts – or facts presented in new ways. Preparing a launch of a report with compelling (but simple) facts and figures.



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- Enlist “newsmakers” to help get your message across – people with high public profile, such as local or national celebrities, respected community leaders, politicians.
- Demonstrate a broad base of supporters. You may get far more attention if it is not just your organisation issuing the message, but a broad coalition of partners who have come together with a focused message, whether on a report or in a street demonstration.
- Plan dramatic events – although make sure the drama doesn’t overshadow the message you want to get across.

As much as possible, keep in mind the geographical reach of your media contacts. A local paper will be interested in a local angle – photos and names with as many local connections as possible. A national paper or station will look most at what trends, statistics and major events happen that effect more than one area. International media need to make the connection between a national story and international trends and news. So, for instance, a large demonstration in the national capital would get more local coverage if information and photos of local people participating in the march were included. International media would probably only be interested if international high-profile people were involved, if it was particularly large, if focused messages and actions connected to other parts of the world.

In all of this, consider also *when*. Timing is a critical factor in getting anything covered by news media. Timing includes considering what are the other big stories being covered – will they overshadow your news or is there a connection you can make. Timing also includes the day and time when you plan your event or release your information. For print media, for instance, World AIDS Day coverage is often written days before December 1, so a press release issued on 30 November or 1 December has little chance of being reported unless it is groundbreaking news. Likewise, events happening in the morning have generally a greater chance of being reported as it gives a chance for journalists to write in the afternoon for their print deadlines, and for broadcasters to prepare clips for evening news.

For most of these media remember – what may be life or death to you, and something you have dedicated your lifetime to may end up as 15 seconds on television or a couple of paragraphs in an article. Don’t get depressed, but do plan realistically and creatively to get the best and most accurate coverage possible.

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### Things to keep in mind as you plan events and messages

Keeping media coverage in mind as you plan messages and events

As you plan your events and messages for World AIDS Day it's always helpful to keep your broad goals in mind:

Who do you want to reach?

What do you want to achieve?

Who can you partner with to broaden support and participation?

Sometimes it helps just to think of the news headline you would want to see for your event, and then plan your messages and events so that headline becomes a reality.

More specifically, think critically as you plan:

What: is your message compelling? What is new? Can you back up your message with simple but compelling stories and facts?

Who: Who is going to help deliver your message? Someone who is directly affected and could share about personal impact could be compelling. What about a high-profile, articulate person who can share their commitment – someone that will attract people and the media to your event and get the message heard more widely?

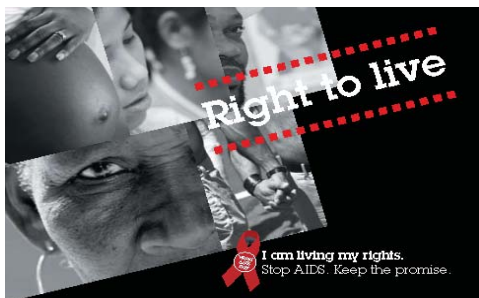
How: What creative activities and events can best attract people and media and convey your message?

When: When would activities be best placed to reach and involve your target audience? (Forget what's "convenient" for the planners!) When is the best time to attract media?

When do you want stories to be covered in the media? (Then let's work out from there the best time to share information and hold events so they can be reported then.)

Where: Where an activity takes place also carries a message, as well as needing to be a place your target audience can reach. Should the event be held in a heavily affected area? In a central place that already attracts many people? In front of government buildings?

If you have ongoing relationships with a journalist, test your ideas with them – is it something they or their agency would be interested in covering? What suggestions do they have to make it more newsworthy?



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If there is an organisation or person particularly in charge of communication and media relations for your events, make sure they are in on the planning meetings. They can help give advice on the best messages and most media-attractive events, as well as gain the information they need up front in order to write press releases, contact journalists, and plan media events and information.

### A word about your message

Your core message is not a speech, an article, or even a paragraph. Your message has to be one line or sentence long. If you could only say one thing, what would it be? Again, sometimes it's helpful to think of the headline you'd like to see – that is your key message.

### Making contact with the media

#### Creating your media contact list

If you don't already have access to a media list, your first step is to know what media you want to reach in your area. Sometimes you can buy media directories, but these are often quite expensive. Instead, you can start by simply writing down the most influential media outlets in your area. Talk to friends, colleagues, and members of your target audience about the news agencies they refer to, whether they are print, broadcast, radio or online.

Then find out who at those agencies would be best to receive your information and stories. Check the phone book or their websites to get contact information. Call them and ask directly who would be best placed to receive media information for World AIDS Day. At the minimum, get their name, direct phone number and email address. If they seem open, give them an initial idea of your events and messages and gauge their reaction. You can try asking when it is usually best to send press releases (a general rule is to send out press releases early on Monday morning when editorial decisions are often made for covering the week). And, if you plan to send photos with captions, ask whether there is a special email address or format that should be used.

When you call, keep in mind:

- Calling early in the day is probably better than the afternoon when most journalists are on deadline.
- Be polite and concise and don't take up more time than the journalist wants to give.

Also find out how you can get your event listed in community calendars and notices.

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### Selecting a media liaison officer

As you plan, it is helpful if you can name one person from your group or organisation as the main contact for media. The person should ideally have some experience in media relations, have a mobile phone, be willing and available to be contacted throughout the day and evening, and be committed to responding quickly to journalists' requests. This person doesn't have to be a "spokesperson" for the group but they should be able to reach designated individuals to set up interviews.

The contact details for the media liaison officer should always be included in material sent out to the media.

### Identifying spokespeople

It's helpful if amongst those organisations and people planning the messages and events you can name several people who are articulate, knowledgeable and comfortable in a media interview. This helps the media liaison officer ensure that the spokespeople are trained in delivering key messages and are readily available to respond to media requests.

If you have special speakers, especially high-profile presenters, make sure you find out if they are willing and available to take media interview requests, and when and how best to contact them.

### What information to provide

The information we provide to the media should spark their interest in covering the story and provide enough information for journalists to report on it accurately and completely. However, you don't want to bombard journalists with press releases that don't provide new information, or they will begin to ignore all the material you send out.

The types of information to be prepared and distributed include:

- a media alert a few weeks in advance giving the highlights of the event.
- a press release at least a week in advance giving more detailed information. Particularly note photo opportunities.
- a press release immediately after the event reporting the major features.
- concise information on the main organisations involved



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Consider having a web site and/or press packs with more information including:

- short biographies of main speakers
- World AIDS Day factsheet prepared by the World AIDS Campaign
- texts of statements or speeches being made, embargoed against delivery\* (don't post on the web until they are delivered).
- photos of speakers in advance (and photos of the event afterwards)

### \*Embargoing information

When you are issuing a report or preparing speeches, often you would prefer not to have the content shared until the report has been launched or the speech delivered. However, journalists need as much information in advance so that they can prepare their reports to be issued as soon as possible. Thus you should share with journalists reports, speech texts and other information a day or more in advance, clearly marking them “Embargoed until [date and time news can be released]”.



### How to write and distribute effective press releases

Remember: A good story for the media will:

- Say something new
- Highlight relevance for the local community
- Mention local leaders or high-profile personalities
- Tell stories about real people's lives
- Provide illustrative facts (make sure to get them right)
- Provide good pictures

### Writing a press release

- Make sure your release is short – one page if at all possible.
- At the top of the page indicate it is a “Press Release” or “For Immediate Release” and the date.
- Have a strong headline – aim for a maximum of 64 characters
- Provide the main information (Who, When, What, Where, and Why) in the first paragraph (editors will cut the story from the bottom up and maybe only leave the first paragraph)
- Include a quote from one of the spokespeople – catchy, clear and to the point.
- In the middle paragraphs you should expand on the purpose of the event, some history behind World AIDS Day, and brief descriptions of any of the special people who will be participating.



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- Briefly describe the organisation(s) sponsoring the event. (If there are a number of them, just list them and at the end provide web addresses for each if possible.)
- Give full contact details so that the media can reach you for more information.
- Send the press release on your organisation's letterhead (or create a new letterhead with the logos of the sponsoring organisations).

Do you have a general press release example? Or can we put links here to some of our press releases for examples?

Distribute your press release via your email list, and follow up with key journalists to make sure they've received it and see if you can spark even more interest in the story.

If you want to send it out as broadly as possible, you can see about sending it out through a newswire service. Costs for these vary widely, so make sure the service will send it to the most appropriate journalists, not just the greatest number.

 Press conferences: To have or not to have?

Many people seem to believe that the way to get media coverage is to hold a press conference. To them, a press conference seems to demonstrate that they have an important event and message, and it seems an easily manageable one-off event. They may have visions of a crowded room and the possibility of vast coverage.

In fact, rarely is this the case. Press conferences are usually not the most effective ways of getting messages out to the media unless they meet some particular characteristics, usually one or more of the following:

- 1) Do you have an announcement or will you reveal findings or a statement that will be newsbreaking?
- 2) Do you have a high profile person who is only available to speak to media at a particular time?
- 3) Do you have a major event that is closed to the media, in which a press conference will allow media a chance to get the key outcomes of the conference by articulate spokespeople?

Before you go through the trouble of setting up a press conference and then having few journalists – or none – turn up, ask yourself these questions, and unless you answer yes to at least one (preferably more), consider other avenues to get your messages across, such as press releases, interviews, photo opportunities.



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### Giving interviews

Even if you are experienced in giving media interviews – whether a pre-arranged interview or a sudden request for comment – you may find these tips useful:

Media calls and requests need immediate responses.

You may want to check on what the reporter has previously written about the topic before talking with them.

Once you agree to an interview, anticipate a reporter's questions and formulate effective answers.

Narrow your message to three or four key points and stick to them.

Remember that as long as you're talking to a journalist, EVERYTHING you say is on the record, even if the journalist has put his or her notepad away. If you do not want it in the story, do not say it.

Be confident. You definitely know more than the reporter.

Always advance YOUR story or point of view.

Enhance the chance that you'll be quoted by offering interesting and compelling facts and colorful, descriptive anecdotes.

Use statistics, but do not get mired in them.

Clear, simple sentences are the most effective.

Avoid jargon and explain all abbreviations if you have to use them.

If you absolutely feel that your answer was not clear, re-state it correctly.

Do not speculate, joke or be sarcastic.

Give positive messages to any negative questions.

Immediately and politely refute any untrue statements.

Do not guess at an answer. Say you don't know and will call them back.

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If a reporter should interrupt you in mid-sentence, do not go along with him/her. When he/she finishes, continue with “As I was saying...”

If a reporter asks a series of rapid-fire questions, answer the one question that will strengthen your point. Do not attempt to respond to them all.

If a reporter uses hostile or negative language, defuse the situation by a positive statement and say something like, “Let’s stay with the important message ...”

Do not lose your temper, become angry or try to debate a journalist. You won’t win.

Prepared for Civil Society participating at the June 2008 UN High Level Meeting on AIDS; modified from Give Power and Resonance to the Nonprofit Voice, by Max Stamper

In addition – be honest. Don’t lie, don’t exaggerate. At a minimum, exaggerations reduce your credibility. At its worst, a lie or gross exaggeration will be caught and that will become the story, not the real message you wanted to get across.

### Using other avenues to get your message out

You can also write a letter to the editor of your newspaper, or a longer opinion piece, on the leadership needed locally, nationally and international for an effective response to HIV and AIDS. To increase the odds of having it placed in the paper of your choice, be sure to review their guidelines for length, timing and approach. If you can have the opinion article submitted by a highly respected individual, that also increases the chance of having it included.

Prepare Public Service Announcements (PSA) for radio, TV on online. Many stations will air these at no cost if it is for a non-profit, non-political event. Prepare texts in 10, 30 and 60 second versions – make sure you read them out loud several times to make sure they are the right length and read well. PSAs for television must be broadcast quality. You can also prepare an online PSA that you can ask others to link to on their websites.

Provide great photo opportunities and gain attention by using banners, t-shirts, stickers and posters and other colorful and graphic elements that use this year’s World AIDS Day images and slogan. Make sure the World AIDS Day theme is prominent.

Place and promote video messages on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) .



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Let campaigns in other countries know what you are doing, too, through the World AIDS Day event listing at [www.worldaidscampaign.org](http://www.worldaidscampaign.org)

### More resources

Working with the Media: A guide to help non-governmental organisations and other health communicators become more active and effective in their relations with the media, prepared by the World Health Communication Association.

English: [http://www.env-health.org/IMG/pdf/English\\_final-2.pdf](http://www.env-health.org/IMG/pdf/English_final-2.pdf)

Deutsch : [http://www.env-health.org/IMG/pdf/German\\_final.pdf](http://www.env-health.org/IMG/pdf/German_final.pdf)

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