

Stop AIDS... Let Us Keep The Promise

As we celebrate World AIDS Day, Chat-Bout.net joins the rest of the world in saying "Stop AIDS. Keep The Promise."

Today we know that 33 million persons worldwide are now infected with HIV. Leadership is the theme for World AIDS Day 2007 and 2008, promoted with the campaigning slogan, "Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise." Leadership is the theme for World AIDS Day 2007 and 2008, promoted with the campaigning slogan, "Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise."

Leadership encourages leaders at all levels to stop AIDS. Building on the 2006 theme of accountability, leadership highlights the discrepancy between the commitments that have been made to halt the spread of AIDS, and actions taken to follow them through. Leadership empowers everyone – individuals, organisations, governments – to lead in the response to AIDS.

In 2007, people around the world were encouraged to take the lead to stop AIDS. Campaigns took the shape of marches, leadership discussions, public awareness events and pledges from leaders. These events all helped to put leadership in the spotlight.

People have offered their leadership – now it is time to deliver. Promises must be kept, and people must feel empowered to act.

Why is 2008 important? 2008 marks the 20th anniversary of World AIDS Day. Since 1988, the face and response to AIDS has greatly changed. While many of these changes are positive, this anniversary offers us an opportunity to highlight how much more still needs to be done.

For example: Leaders in most countries from around the world now acknowledge the threat of AIDS, and many have committed to do something about it. As of 2007, nearly all countries have national policies on HIV. However, despite these policies, most have not been fully implemented and many lack funding allocations.

- While treatment for HIV and AIDS has improved and become more widespread since 1988, many still do not have access to it – in 2007 only 31% of those in low- to middle-income countries who need treatment received it.

- Despite HIV awareness now reaching nearly all areas of the globe, infection rates are still happening 2.7 times faster than the increase in number of people receiving treatment.

- While the number of countries protecting people living with HIV continue to increase, one third of countries still lack legal protections and stigma and discrimination continues to be a major threat to universal access.

- More broadly, real action on HIV and AIDS and human rights remains lacking. Legal barriers to HIV services still exist for groups such as women, adolescents, sex workers, people who use drugs, and men having sex with men, and programmatic responses promoting HIV-related human rights have yet to be prioritised.

World AIDS Day began in 1988 when health ministers from around the world met and agreed on the concept of the day as an opportunity for all of us to come together to demonstrate the importance of AIDS and show solidarity for the cause. In 2008, this underlining principle of solidarity and awareness remains the same.

We have only two years to go for "the goal of universal access to comprehensive prevention programmes, treatment, care and support by 2010"[1]. To achieve this goal, leadership and action is needed now. Governments must deliver on the promises they have made. Communities must encourage leadership of its members. Individuals must feel empowered to access treatment, to know their rights and take action against stigma and discrimination, and to know and use methods of prevention against receiving and transmitting HIV. Now, more than ever is the time to lead – empower – deliver. source : BBC.com