

‘The greatest weapon in humanity’s armoury to contain this pandemic remains humanity’s most unique characteristic – communication.’ The Panos Institute

The sheer numbers of people dying from AIDS today despite the efforts of governments and civil society demands a rethink in our responses to the epidemic. The world’s few success stories show that HIV prevention messages work only in a healthy communication environment, where people are free to talk openly about sex within and between communities. Programmes that support this and the development of local, active and organised civil society are more likely to work. Prominence must be given to solutions that focus as much on giving a voice to those affected by HIV as they do on educating them with messages from those that are not.

What are people doing around the world on communications and HIV and AIDS, and what can you do to support an open environment for communication on HIV and AIDS?

### **Organising a media campaign on HIV/AIDS**

What is a media campaign? How should I even start one? On this website, UNICEF provides an online guide to help young people [start a local HIV/AIDS media relations campaign](#) to help educate peers and the community. The guide covers several categories of news media including television, radio, newspapers, and magazines and describes their different characteristics, deadlines and ways of using media material.

What have the media themselves agreed to do on the HIV/AIDS crisis? United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan convened Presidents, CEOs and senior executives from more than 20 of the world’s leading media companies to launch the new Global Media AIDS Initiative during 2004. The Initiative aims to activate media organizations to reach the world’s people – especially youth – with information about how to prevent and treat HIV and to help combat AIDS-related stigma and discrimination. Take a look at the decisions made between [the media and the United Nations on media and HIV/AIDS](#).

For some useful pointers on showing journalists how to work with children, see [Guidelines and Principles for Reporting on Issues Involving Children](#)

by the International Federation of Journalists.

### Get ideas by looking at other young people's media campaigns!

**[Straight Talk](#)** is an adolescent newspaper published in Kenya that focuses upon sexuality and reproductive health. The newspaper is run by an adolescent editorial board that controls and directs the content and production of the newspaper. Straight Talk is targeted at young people aged between 14 and 25 in an attempt to keep them safe from sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies, through communication for better health. A recent publication by the organisation focuses on the experience of involving adolescents in an active and participatory programme. Tell us about your communication work on HIV and AIDS!

In Cambodia, **Os Tos Mhong! ("Cool!")** is shaking up the radio waves with a lively mix of phone-ins, features and music plus competitions. Presenters Vannak and Soka will be your friendly guides through the ups and downs of growing up. 'We're creating an interactive programme where young people can talk in a safe space,' says Senior Producer Kong Villa. The fresh exciting format blends talk-radio, the latest music, expert advice and regular features such as 'What's On?' and 'Dr. Love', a heart doctor ready to help with all of your relationship problems. [See the MAGIC website for more ideas!](#)

**'Mundo Sem Segredos' or 'World Without Secrets'**, a children's HIV/AIDS radio programme, went on the air in Zambezia province, Mozambique for the first time on Sunday, 26 September, 2004. The aim of the programme is to make HIV/AIDS relevant for young people and not just an abstract concept which they can't relate to their own lives. Because the programmes are made by children, they will reach young listeners in a way that they can understand and accept. As well as providing the basic facts, the programmes will also aim to promote a greater respect for people living with HIV/AIDS and an understanding of the other issues which children will face as they go through adolescence. This idea and many others was taken from the [MAGIC website](#), a network of children and adults working to enable children to get involved in the media.

In Nepal, an HIV-prevention campaign has been launched by [Population Services International](#) that places a sticker bearing the message "Protect yourself and others from HIV/AIDS" on every single piece

of mail entering and leaving the country. This is an effort to reach rural and remote places of Nepal where people do not have access to televisions, newspapers, and radios, and where HIV prevalence is often higher than in urban areas.

And **what can we all do better** with regards to communications and HIV/AIDS? Panos, the UK-based think-tank, has produced ['Missing the message'](#) ; a report reviewing the global response to HIV/AIDS over the last twenty years, concentrating particularly on the need for communication. It says that while current international interest, funding and mobilisation for AIDS are creating a unique opportunity to build an effective response to the crisis, few of the lessons of the past are contributing to current approaches.

For many more papers and academic resources on HIV and AIDS see [The Child Rights Information Network.](#)