

GUIDE TO ACTION

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Learn the skills you need to start your own community project. You can find lots of great ideas in these pages.

FIRST STEPS

Introduction

"My suggestion is to become a doer instead of just a hearer. And things can be done. A doer hears and accepts the need for action, working towards the common goal of the people and their concerns." Young Canadian participant, Voices of Youth online chat, November 2002

The state of the world is such that there are an awful lot of things to be done. There are also many different approaches.

If you would like to become a doer, this section aims to help you take the first steps:

- **to identify the issues** that matter to you most;
- **to inform yourself** about those issues;
- **to think about the sort of action you want to take and the level** at which you want to be involved — local, national, global, or a combination.

Choosing your issue

"We are the world's children. We are the victims of exploitation and abuse. We are street children. We are the children of war. We are the victims and orphans of HIV/AIDS. We are denied good-quality education and health care. We are victims of political, economic, cultural, religious and environmental discrimination. We are children whose voices are not being heard: it is time we are taken into account. From the Children's Forum at the UN Special Session on Children

Being affected by a particular issue, or feeling strongly about it, is usually the reason why people want to take action. So you may not need help with finding a 'cause'.

On the other hand, action needs a sharp focus to be effective, so the first thing you may want to do is assess your priorities (figure out what is most important to you). For example, it is hard to take effective action on an issue as broad as global poverty. There are so many causes and so many consequences. It is better to concentrate on a specific issue connected to poverty, such as child labour, education, homelessness, right to play, emergencies and HIV and AIDS.

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Then you could select a particular aspect of one of these issues. Just to give a few examples:

Education: discrimination against girls in education

Homelessness: children living on city streets

Child labour: children working long hours in your country

Right to play: children not having a space to play sport

Emergencies: children needing support and care during an emergency

HIV: lack of information about the virus and how to keep yourself safe

Doing your research

"If we gain a greater understanding of what we face, we can face it better. 'Know your enemy' and all that!" Youth from Canada, Voices of Youth message board

Research is a crucial part of deciding on which issue you want to take action. And once you have made your decision, you will probably want to investigate the subject in more depth. The more you know about your issue, the more effective your action is likely to be. Here are some of the questions you should think about:

- Who is affected, directly and indirectly?
 - Is there a particular group that is vulnerable, for example girls, or a particular age-group?
 - How does the issue or problem affect the wider community?
- Where do the people who are affected live?
 - Is this a global, regional, national, or local problem, or a combination?
- How are people affected?
 - Which rights are being violated?
 - How does this issue change/impact people's lives? Negatively and positively.
 - Does anyone, or any group, benefit from the situation as it is?
- Why are people affected?
 - What is the underlying cause of the problem? In other words, what other factors — such as poverty, lack of school books, unemployment, or lack of access to clean water, to give just a few examples — may be partly responsible?
 - What are the reasons why this group or groups of people are affected more than others?

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- What can be done?
 - What solutions have been suggested or tried?
 - What seems to work best, or what do you think might work best?
 - Who is in a position to make decisions to bring about change?
 - Who is preventing change?
 - What is the most effective action that you could take to improve the situation?

Finding information

There is a lot of information out there, and much of it is readily available, especially if you have access to the Internet — which you clearly do! But in some cases, and particularly if you are concerned with what is happening locally, you may need to do some more active detective work. Here are some ideas about where you can look for information and how you can try to make sure that information can be trusted.

Non-governmental organizations, schools and universities, governments, local institutions and businesses all have a wide range of published information that could be useful. Sources include:

Printed material: newspapers, books, magazines and journals. If you have access to a library or youth centre, where many of these resources should be available for free, use it!

Websites: these days there are online versions of vast quantities of material that were traditionally only available in print, as well as a huge range of information specially created for the World Wide Web.

Other media: news programmes, documentaries and even dramatizations on radio or television, or at the cinema or on video, can all be useful.

As well as using information that is publicly available, you could contact people and organizations and ask questions directly. This can be very helpful, because you can focus on specific questions. For example, you could try:

- contacting corporations and local businesses;
- contacting national and local government representatives;
- talking to teachers, parent/guardians and other relations, and community leaders;
- talking to other young people;
- carrying out your own surveys and interviews;
- contacting local organizations, groups and religious institutions.

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Remember that locally based research may be the most useful for practical action in your community. For example, although it is a good idea to inform yourself about the global situation concerning such issues as HIV and AIDS, education, or access to clean water, it may be more practical and helpful to know that local families affected by HIV need help with chores, or that young children need supervision on the journey to school, or that there is a load of rotting rubbish near your water supply!

Assessing information sources

Unfortunately, you cannot believe everything you read, hear or see. Organizations, institutions and individuals tend to have goals and beliefs that affect what information they choose to present and how they present it. Even sources that aim to give all sides of an argument may distort the truth because of such factors as limited resources (so they may not know all the facts), editorial values (for example, the desire to make a story exciting or relevant to a local audience) or unconscious bias, or because they simply made mistakes!

This does not mean that research is pointless and that it cannot help you get closer to the truth. But it does mean that you should:

- use a variety of sources to cross-check facts and conclusions, and to give you all sides of the argument;
- always bear in mind who is providing information. In particular, ask yourself:
 - Who is financing or sponsoring this source?
 - What qualifications do the authors have? Have you heard of them?
 - Who is the information aimed at?
 - Do the authors and sponsors have specific interests/goals/beliefs/experiences that might influence the way in which they present information?
 - Where do the authors get their facts and how reliable are the sources of those facts?
 - How up-to-date is the information?

The numbers game

Statistics are often used to support an argument or position. But judging their reliability is itself difficult. Statistics can be chosen and interpreted to support particular points of view. To some extent you can judge the reliability of facts by the reputation of the source and the breadth of the investigation. A large-scale survey by a top university, for example, would carry more weight than a small survey carried out by the supporters of a specific campaign. If you can find out

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how and from whom the statistics were collected, this will also help you determine how reliable they are. For example, a survey that only interviews men will yield very different results to one that interviews both men and women.

The wild web

The Internet has made a vast amount of information instantly available to anyone with access to the World Wide Web. However, for the very reason that there is such a variety of information online, and because it is so easy for anyone to set up a website, you need to be especially careful when you are assessing Internet sources. All the questions in Assessing Information above are relevant, but it is particularly important that you ask yourself who is really behind the information on the website. Is it just an individual or a small campaigning group? Who backs or funds the site? If the status of the information providers is not clear and easy to check, beware!

Conducting a survey

A survey can give you first-hand information about how an issue affects people in your area. It can also tell you what people think about an issue, and so help you identify potential supporters and opponents.

Once you have worked out exactly what information you are looking for, the next step is to develop a questionnaire that will collect it efficiently.

Developing the questionnaire

Your questionnaire should include some basic questions about each person that responds – asking their gender and age-group, for example. This will help you analyse your results (see below). But you should not collect any information that would make it possible to identify the individual that answered the questions. Make it clear to respondents that their answers will be anonymous.

Each question should address only one issue and should be as clear and specific as possible. Avoid questions that seem to invite a certain answer, or are 'leading', for example: 'Do you think it is wrong for girls to be kept away from school?' Instead you could ask:

- Should all boys be at school? Yes/No/Depends on the circumstances
- Should all girls be at school? Yes/No/Depends on the circumstances

Try to keep your questionnaire short and simple, asking people to circle/tick 'yes' or 'no', or to circle/tick a choice from multiple options. This will make it much easier to organize and analyse the results.

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Taking a lead

As part of a health-education project, 10- and 11-year-old pupils at a school on the outskirts of Liverpool, in the United Kingdom, carried out a survey asking which environmental problems most worried young people. They discovered that a major concern was dog faeces on wasteland around the school, where children used to play. Researching this issue, they found that dog faeces are often infected with a parasite that can cause illness and even blindness.

The children then got together to work out the best solutions to the problem. They decided to produce an educational puppet show for other children and an information leaflet for dog owners. They even designed 'poop-scoopers', made from plastic bags and bottles, which dog owners could use to clean up after their dogs. Whenever they saw people walking their dogs in the area, they gave them a leaflet and offered them a 'poop-scooper'.

The children also mounted an information and lobbying campaign with parents and the local council. As a result, their local environmental health officer visited the school to discuss plans for the development of the area.

Collecting and analysing the data

You are more likely to get replies if you ask your questions face to face, but you can also try conducting your survey by phone, mail or even e-mail. Always be polite, and if someone tells you that they do not want to participate or do not have the time, do not try to persuade them. Consult parents and teachers about safety: you may need adult supervision if you are asking the questions in person; at the very least you should work in pairs.

When you have collected as much information as you can, add up the totals for each multiple-choice answer and arrange them in a table. You should also work out what percentage each total represents by dividing that number by the total number of people who responded to the question and then multiplying by 100.

The final step is to write a report including this table, highlighting significant results and drawing any conclusions you can. Your report should also include an explanation of how the survey was conducted: where and how you collected the information, who the respondents were, and how many people responded. It is a good idea to include a copy of the questionnaire in your report, so that anyone who is interested can see the exact questions that lie behind the statistics.

When you are analysing your results and writing your report, bear in mind what you have found out about the people who responded. For instance, if you were analysing the results of our sample survey below, it would be interesting to know what differences there were between the responses of boys and girls.

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You might be able to interest local press or radio in the results of your survey — see Using the media in Communication.

Sample survey

The School Attendance Survey

Our group, Kids in School, is carrying out a survey about school attendance in our local area. Please take a few moments to answer the questions. We hope the information will help our campaign to make sure all children get an education, which is their right under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

All information will be anonymous.
Thank you for taking part in our survey!

Please circle the answers you choose clearly.

1. What is your gender?

Male / Female

2. What is your age?

under 10 / 10-13 / 14-16 / 17-19 / over 19

3. Are you in full-time education?

Yes / No

4. Are you in part-time education?

Yes / No

5. Do you sometimes have to miss school because of other commitments?

No, never / Very occasionally / Occasionally / Quite frequently / Frequently

6. If you are of school age but you are not in school, or you sometimes have to miss school, what is/are the main reason/s? (circle more than one option if appropriate)

Cost of school / Problems getting to school / Helping at home / Doing other work / Marriage / Parents do not think school is worth while

7. Do you think all boys should be at school?

Yes / No / Depends on the circumstances

8. Do you think all girls should be at school?

Yes / No / Depends on the circumstances

9. Would you be interested in supporting our campaign to get more girls and boys into school?

Yes / No / Maybe

Return to:

Address

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Choosing your approach

"Society has to change. The change must come from people, not just governments." Sandra, 15, Mexico, speaking at the Children's Forum of the United Nations Special Session on Children, May 2002

Once you have chosen your issue and done some research, the next step is to decide what sort of approach you want to take. This page outlines some options. But remember that you do not necessarily have to choose between them. A combination of approaches may also be possible.

Individual or group?

Firstly, you need to decide whether you want to act as an individual or as part of a group.

Be a role model: Large-scale change involves individuals changing the way they behave. So making sure your own behaviour is in line with your aims and beliefs is a good starting-point. If you show the strength of your beliefs in the way you live, you can become a role-model: your commitment and confidence will influence and inspire others.

Help others in your community: Another good starting-point for individual action is simply to help out where you can in your family and community. As an individual you could also plan your own project or campaign. Or you could concentrate on spreading the word by talking to young people and other members of the community, or using any of the approaches to raising awareness and making your views known described in Communication. Passing on important information is one of the most effective forms of action.

Come together: Much can be done as an individual. But there is undoubtedly strength in numbers. If you want to join forces with other like-minded people, one option is to support or join an existing national or international organization. Such organizations may have programmes or campaigns involving young people, such as peer-education programmes (in which young people receive training to pass on information to others in their age-group).

Alternatively, if there is one, you could join a school, community or other local group working in your chosen field.

If there is not an existing group, you could form your own group or club to take action. This would give you and other members more control over the aims of the group and how it carries them out, but bear in mind that this option requires a lot of work and a long-term commitment.

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Local, national, or international?

Whether or not you are acting as an individual or as part of a group, action can be taken on many different levels: local, national and international. UNICEF, for example, works on all three levels:

- **internationally**, as a forum for decision-making and setting goals for protecting children's rights;
- **nationally**, on country-wide campaigns and programmes in cooperation with governments and non-governmental organizations;
- **locally**, with local government, community and other voluntary groups, on specific projects aiming to make a difference to people's – and children's – daily lives.

Similarly, an individual or small local group can try to help influence policy and action at the national and even international levels, or they can focus on a specific local problem.

Whatever the direction you choose, working out your goals and exactly how you will try to reach them is crucial. So the next step is Getting organized.

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GETTING ORGANIZED

Introduction

*"If we come together and walk together in one step, we can make a difference."
Joseph, 12, from Uganda, speaking at the Children's Forum, UN Special Session
on Children, May 2002*

There are lots of ways of making a difference (see First steps for an introduction to various approaches). One approach is to join up with like-minded people. Working as a team can help you get things done.

There may already be a suitable local group that you can join. If not, you may want to form your own. This is a big challenge, but a very exciting one.

This section aims to give you some tips on planning a project or campaign, whether you are starting something new or want to make an existing group or project more effective. Some of the information here will also be useful if you are taking action on your own or at least outside a formal group structure.

Gathering support

*"If there's going to be change, then there is a need for people to motivate other people. ... Things are changing through youth coming together." Noeline, 17,
Secretary of the Northern Ireland Youth Forum*

If you are thinking about setting up your own group or club to take action, here are some suggestions for finding members and sources of help.

Contact relevant organizations: A good first step would be to contact any local or national organizations that take an interest in your chosen issue. As well as lending them your support, you may be able to benefit from their advice and support in taking action locally.

Talk to people you know: You should talk to your family and friends and other young people and adults in your school and community. Ask them if they would be willing to support or help you in any way and remind them of the important roles we all play in each other lives. Do not give up if you come across negative reactions or indifference. Persistence is crucial to success.

Arrange public talks and discussions: You could ask for permission to talk about the issue at school, at your local place of worship, at community gatherings and at sports clubs or events in which you are involved.

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Set up a meeting: Setting up an informal meeting is also a good way to gather support. This first meeting could be at someone's home, at school, at a community centre or place of worship, or anywhere else where you can get permission to meet in relative comfort and without too much disturbance. Try to arrange a place and a time that will be convenient for other young people. Ask for permission to put up posters announcing the meeting at school, community halls, and on public notice-boards. Follow up your posters by speaking to as many people as you can face-to-face. The day before your meeting, remind as many people as you can about it.

Building a team

The only requirements for membership of your group should be interest and motivation. So welcome any young person who wants to get involved. Everyone has something to offer.

However, you should also aim for a good mixture of people in terms of their gender, background and culture. This sort of difference can be a strength!

In addition, make sure that your group includes people who are directly affected by the issue you are dealing with. For example, if your group wants to campaign to make sure every child can go to school, it is important that you have a good balance of girls and boys, and that you include young people who have themselves been unable to attend school. If you are aiming to fight the spread of HIV and AIDS, you should include young people who are living with HIV themselves or whose families have been directly affected.

*"One thing is for sure: I want to do things that benefit others. Young people can play a big part in this prevention by helping one another stay HIV-negative."
Teleza, 13, from Malawi*

Skills and roles

Every team will need a different mixture of people to be effective, but you may want to try to include people who have the following **skills** and who are:

- **creative** to think of good ideas for campaigning, fundraising and other forms of action;
- **artistic** to help create posters and displays;
- **organized** to help plan events and make your group function smoothly and efficiently;
- **good at writing** to compose letters, speeches, press releases and so on;
- **logical** to help solve problems;
- **good at maths** to take care of finances;

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- **level-headed** to keep you focused and make sure your goals are realistic;
- **passionate** and enthusiastic to keep people motivated and aiming high;
- **good communicators** to negotiate, help overcome personality clashes, and run meetings;
- **determined** to refuse to accept defeat.

Important **roles** include:

- organizing meetings
- conducting meetings (the person who does this is sometimes called the chairperson, moderator or facilitator)
- organizing events and activities
- organizing publicity
- organizing membership and recruitment
- taking notes of what was said and agreed at meetings (the person who does this and looks after membership is often called the secretary)
- taking care of finances (this person is often called the treasurer)
-

A note on money: It is very important to account for even the smallest sums of money that are raised or spent and to keep any funds you have safe — ideally in a bank account in the name of the group. It may be a good idea to ask a responsible adult to give advice on, and help oversee, finances.

See the checklist of tasks that need to be tackled when you are establishing your group.

Checklist: Building a team

Here is a checklist of tasks that need to be tackled when you are establishing your group:

- Defining your overall objectives.
- Getting ideas for action.
- Choosing a name and perhaps developing a logo and slogan.
- Electing, choosing, or agreeing on who should be responsible for specific roles and jobs. These roles do not necessarily have to be carried out by one person — they could be shared between two or three, or carried out on a rotational basis. Try to take advantage of people's individual strengths.
- Establishing rules that you all agree on. These might include respecting each individual's opinion and rights, which is essential to the successful

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functioning of a team, not interrupting when someone else is speaking, and allowing the chairperson or moderator of a meeting to decide when it is time to move on to another point. They might also include guidelines on taking votes when there is disagreement on an important issue.

Explore the other features in Getting Organized for ideas on how to tackle these tasks.

Holding meetings

Meetings are an opportunity for group members to develop and work through their ideas, as well as keep in touch with one another.

The first meeting

Your first meeting is a chance for potential members to get to know each other and decide whether they really want to be involved.

You could start by asking people to introduce themselves in turn: to say hello, give their names and maybe say a little about themselves. Then you could have a brief discussion about the issue and the purpose of the group. What do you want to achieve? How can everyone get involved? What sort of activities have people got in mind? Encourage everyone to join in.

Do not try to make decisions such as choosing a name, giving people specific tasks or setting specific goals at this point. But you should fix a date and time for the next meeting and try to agree on what you want that meeting to accomplish. Encourage people to learn as much as they can about the issue, then to share what they know and to listen to others.

Once your group is established, it is a good idea to have meetings at a regular time and place, so that people can make sure they can attend.

Taking a lead

Kodjo, from Togo in West Africa, has been fighting for human rights since he was 12 years old. A girl student at his school had been unfairly penalized after rejecting her teacher's sexual advances, and Kodjo organized his classmates to protest and write letters in her support.

In 1994 Kodjo founded the non-governmental organization, 'La Conscience', which aims to promote and educate young people about human rights and democracy. La Conscience is also the name of the newspaper the group publishes, which is entirely written by young people.

"If there is hope for change, it lies with the nation's youth," Kodjo says.

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La Conscience has organized countless conferences and debates in churches, mosques, schools and in villages throughout the country. The organization has also trained more than 60 volunteers from all regions of Togo to educate and train others to spread awareness about HIV prevention in their communities. In 2003, the organization opened a centre for the rehabilitation of trafficked children — the first of its kind in Togo.

Later meetings

You should set goals for every meeting and write them down in an agenda. An agenda is a list of items you want to cover and decisions you want to make. It will help you stay focused and prevent you from wasting time.

It is a good idea to choose someone to conduct a meeting. It is this person's job to make sure everyone has their say, but also to keep the discussion focused and move it on if the group is spending too much time on details.

Remember that someone also needs to take notes of what is said and decided during the meeting and to write them up afterwards.

Sample agenda

Agenda for Streetwise meeting, 2 December 2003, 17.00-18.00

Facilitator: Maria

Items:

- Introductions. Welcoming of new members. *Maria — 5 minutes*
- Update on action/progress/developments since last meeting, and review of last meeting. *Ngozi — 5 minutes*
- Brainstorm ideas for activities. *Tamana to facilitate — 20 minutes* (See Brainstorming)
- Invite volunteers/nominations for club president, secretary and treasurer, to be appointed at next meeting. *Ngozi — 10 minutes*
- Any further business (questions or subjects for discussion from members). *Maria -15 minutes*
- Confirm date and time of next meeting. *Maria*
- Snacks and drinks, or just time to talk!

Checklist: Holding meetings

Here's a checklist for holding successful meetings:

- Find a comfortable place to meet, such as at someone's home, at school, at a community centre or place of worship.

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- Set goals and make an agenda. If you can, distribute the agenda in advance.
- Provide any materials you will need, such as writing materials, chalk board, notes on particular issues, etc.
- Arrange suitable seating — it is quite a good idea to sit in a circle, so everyone can see and hear everyone else.
- Have someone 'chair' or 'facilitate' the meeting (you could take turns with this job).
- Have someone take notes of what is discussed and decided.
- Once the meeting starts, stick to the agenda! But encourage everyone to have their say on the issues under discussion.
- Try to stay on the topic under discussion and not get distracted by other issues or concerns.
- Try to avoid spending too much time on details. One way of doing this is to set up a small group that will be responsible for working out the details later.
- Set goals to be achieved before the next meeting
- After the meeting, make sure all members of the group get a copy of notes from the meeting. This is a good way of reminding everyone who attended the meeting of what was agreed and who should be doing what in the action plan, and of telling anyone who could not attend about important decisions.

Brainstorming

'Brainstorming' is a good way of exploring possibilities and developing ideas in a group. It involves asking everyone to think up as many ideas as they can on a particular issue. It is important not to worry about working ideas through at the time, but to try and think up as many different ideas as possible.

How to brainstorm:

- Choose the subject for brainstorming — for example, in the early stages of setting up your group, you might want ideas for a name or suggestions for action you could take.
- Explain that the aim is for everyone to make as many suggestions as they can, without worrying about whether or not they sound sensible or possible. Sometimes the best ideas sound silly at first!
- No one should make any comment about the ideas at the time. And ask people to try not to react in a negative or mocking way. If someone is made to feel foolish, they will stop contributing.

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- Someone should write down every idea, no matter how wild they seem, somewhere where everyone can see, such as on a board or large sheet of paper.
- Once everyone has given all the ideas they can think of, you need to agree on which are the best or most important. Then everyone could vote for their favourite, or perhaps their top three.
- Allow time for general discussion, but only after the brainstorming process has been completed.

Taking a lead

In 2001, Anuj, a 15-year-old homeless boy living on the streets of New Delhi in India, became the manager of the Bal Vikas (Children's Development Bank).

The bank is the initiative of a local non-governmental organization, Butterflies, that runs various programmes for street and working children. But the operating rules were worked out by the children themselves in brainstorming sessions in their 'Bal Sabha' (Children's Council). And the bank is run entirely by the children, with adults acting only as facilitators.

The goals of the bank are to provide street and working children with facilities for depositing and withdrawing money, and to emphasize the importance of financial security. The bank also helps street children to develop entrepreneurial and management skills.

The National Foundation of India put up some start-up money for the bank to which the young people added their own savings. The bank now hosts saving accounts for 700 children, holding a total of US\$2,572, and some \$1,970 is out on loan.

After serving as the bank's manager for more than a year, Anuj handed over the post to other street children he trained. Now he acts as the bank's promoter and helps to set up Children's Development Banks in other South Asian cities. He also attends school full-time and hopes to have a future in finance or journalism.

Excerpted with permission from Butterflies India.

Forming strategy

Defining your goals

Before you start planning any activities, you need to define your overall goals and objectives formally. You may find brainstorming a useful starting-point.

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One option is to sum up your goals in a 'mission statement' — a short statement expressing the reason for your group's existence. Here is an example, just to give you an idea of what a mission statement might say:

The members of the Streetwise AIDS Awareness Club seek to give young people clear and accurate information about HIV and AIDS and how they can protect themselves. We also aim to reduce the risk of infection by improving their — and our — decision-making, communication and negotiation skills, and to fight discrimination against people who are HIV-positive.

If you do not want to write a formal mission statement, you could make a simple list of objectives instead.

Make sure all the members of your group are actively involved in defining your objectives and that everyone has a copy of your statement of list of goals.

Considering options for action

The next step is to work out the best practical ways of achieving your goals. Again, brainstorming would be a good way of gathering ideas for particular activities or projects and encouraging people to think creatively.

The sort of ideas you come up with will depend on the issue you have chosen as well as on members' experiences, the local situation and the resources you have. For example, the members of Streetwise might come up with the following suggestions for passing on information about HIV and AIDS:

- Distribute fact sheets
- Talk to friends and relations
- Stage short dramas in the street and at school
- Put on a presentation in class or to your families
- Make a short film to be shown on TV or at the cinema
- Write an article for a newspaper
- Write and record a song
- Do puppet shows
- Produce a programme for local radio
- Create a website

Once you have gathered as many ideas as you can, the next step is to think about how well each proposed activity would help you to meet your goals,

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balancing difficulty against effectiveness. Clearly some of Streetwise's ideas are much more expensive and ambitious than others. Do you think that the most ambitious, assuming they were possible, would be the most effective? Which might you choose?

Planning projects and activities

When you have decided on a particular activity or project, the next step is to work out, in as much detail as you can, how you will carry it out.

Identifying supporters and opponents

One important point to consider at this stage is who is likely to support and help you, and also who may oppose what you are doing.

For example, Streetwise might get support from the head teacher of the local school, from a regional youth or education office, and from any local, national, or international non-governmental organizations working to prevent the spread of HIV. On the other hand, the group might meet opposition from parents who object to information about sex for younger children, and from others who think they know all about HIV and AIDS and do not want to be told what to think by 'a bunch of kids'.

When you have identified who might support and who might oppose what you are doing, think about what you can do with this information. Approaching potential supporters for advice and/or practical and financial help is one obvious step. But it may be equally useful to talk to potential opponents. Might you be able to win them over, or at least persuade them not to actively oppose what you are doing? Are there things you could do to reassure them without compromising your plans?

Working out the details

As well as setting your group's overall goals, you should define the goals of any proposed activity as precisely as you can (see the checklists for questions to ask yourselves).

For instance, our example group Streetwise exist to 'to give young people clear and accurate information about HIV and AIDS'. If they decided to try to do this by staging a short drama, they would need to work out exactly what information they were trying to get across and to whom.

Each activity needs to be carefully analyzed and broken down into steps. Then each step or job should be assigned to an individual or group with a deadline for accomplishing it.

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Taking a lead

In Umuahia, Nigeria, there used to be a very poor rate of immunization in the Afugiri community, despite good facilities. But then children and young people belonging to the child-rights club at the Williams Memorial Secondary School decided to do something about it.

The club organized health discussions on immunization, HIV and AIDS, breastfeeding and child rights issues, and encouraged women to bring their children for immunization. Then, after a day's training from UNICEF field officers and government health officials, they went from house to house tracking down young children who had missed out.

The results were amazing. During the eight months following the launch of the project, an average of 328 infants a month were immunized, compared with only eight infants a month before the campaign. In addition, more women started using other facilities available at the health centre.

Checklist: Planning projects and activities

The following checklist of questions should help you make sure you cover all the necessary steps in planning your project.

Why?

- Why have you chosen this activity? What exactly are you trying to achieve, and what message are you trying to get across?

What?

- What does the event, activity or project itself involve? What steps/actions will the group need to take?
- What could go wrong, and what can you do to reduce the risks? And what will you do if the project does not go as planned?

Who?

- Who is your audience? Who are you trying to reach?
- Who will be affected, directly or indirectly?
- Who is likely to support you and offer help?
- Who might oppose what you are doing?
- Who is going to take charge of the activity?
- Who will do what?
- Who needs to be asked for permission?
- Who else — for example parents, teachers, officials and the media

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When?

- On what day(s) will the activity take place? When is/are the best time(s)? Have you thought of what else might be going on at the same time that may support or conflict with your activity?
- How long will the preparation take, and when does each step need to be completed?

Where?

- Where is the best location?

How?

- How, exactly, will you see your project through? How will each job be carried out? (What skills are needed, for example? What preparations are necessary? What materials are needed?)
- How much will it cost, if anything? And how will you raise the money?
- How will you publicize the activity or event, in addition to contacting the media?
- How will people get to the event or activity?
- How will the expected results match up with the project's goals?
- Finally, how will you judge whether the event or activity was a success? For instance, will you count how many people attended? How will you find out what they thought or learned? Is there a way of getting detailed feedback, for example by asking people to fill out a questionnaire?

Formalizing your plan

For any activity, event or project, you should write down your action plan and then circulate it to everyone involved, making sure their roles are clear. You should also invite comments so that you can improve your plan. Make sure you leave enough time for people to give you their feedback, and for their suggestions to be incorporated into the plan.

Using the Planning Chart for Action

What do you think a completed chart might look like for Streetwise's proposed drama project? You could try filling out an example chart and then comparing it with the sample completed chart attached below. But remember, there is no 'correct' version of an action plan, only versions that are well considered or less well considered. You will have your own ideas about how to set about this — and they may well be better than ours!

Notes:

- The 'steps' column should include a list of the preparation, planning and practical steps needed to carry out the activity, in the proper order, together with the name of the person/people who are responsible for carrying it out.

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- In the 'deadlines' column you should write down the date and perhaps even the time by which each step should be achieved.
- Fill in the 'cost/budget' column with the approximate cost of each step (if any).
- The 'effects/impacts' column should list the likely specific effects or results an activity will have. Remember, the effects/impacts and objectives should be connected!

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COMMUNICATION

Introduction

"We can convince all the youth around us that we have to be heard so new ideas can come out ... and we have to show the children what their rights are, so if any violations happen, they will know." Participant from Sudan, Voices of Youth online chat, November 2002

Effective communication is essential to bringing about change, and communication with and between young people has a special part to play. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, young people tend to be more willing than older people to change their behaviour. Secondly, changes in the behaviour of young people are likely to make the most difference in the future, because young people have the most future! Last but not least, young people are the best communicators with other young people.

There are many different ways of getting your message across, and the best approach depends on what you are trying to achieve. These pages provide an introduction to different communication methods, explain the special characteristics and advantages of each and offer a practical guide to using them.

Letters

Letters are a good way of asking for information and telling decision-makers and other influential people what you think.

Nowadays most of the people you may want to write to will have an e-mail address. But e-mails are very easy to ignore, so it is probably still best to make at least the first approach with a formal letter.

This page contains a few tips for writing letters as well as some examples of different sorts of letters you may find useful.

General tips

Here are some tips that will apply to all your letters.

- Type your letter if you can. If this is not possible, write it out neatly.
- Include the full name, title and address of the recipient. Try to identify an individual to write to — you may be able to do this via a website or by phoning an organization's main public enquiry number.
- Include the date, and a full address for a reply, as well as a phone number and e-mail address if you have them.
- Keep the content brief and focused. It is normally a good idea to stick to one issue per letter — you are unlikely to get a useful response if you write

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an essay on all the world's problems, however brilliant your analysis may be!

- Always be polite and respectful, and use the standard polite forms of address and signing off in your country, or the country of the recipient if different from your own.
- Ask someone to check your spelling and grammar.
- Keep a copy of all your letters (write out another copy if necessary) so you have a record of whom you have contacted, when, and exactly what you said.

Letter template

You could base your letters on the following template:

(Your group's name)
Your full address
Your phone number
Your e-mail address

Date

Recipient's name
Recipient's organization
Recipient's full address

Dear Sir or Madam (or preferably Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./or the appropriate form of address for that country. Name, if you know the name.)

My name is _____ and I am ___ years old.

(If applicable) I belong to / My friends and I have set up the _____ group, which aims to _____ (include your mission statement or otherwise sum up your overall goals here. We have already _____. (Keep this brief, but mention any former projects to encourage the recipient to take you seriously. For example, an AIDS Awareness Club might say something like: "We have already held a series of school-based discussion groups on protecting yourself from HIV." You could also include an important background fact in this paragraph, for example, on the subject of education, "We are driven by the knowledge that more than 121 million children of primary-school age are not in school, including _____ in our region.")

I am writing to you because (see below for tips on the content of various types of letters)

Thank you for taking the time to consider my/our letter. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Sign your name

Print or type your name

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Content

Asking for information or resources: If you are looking for general information, ask organizations if they have an information pack for young people. Otherwise, try to be as precise as you can about the information you want. For example:

I am writing to you because I/we are researching the subject of child labour in _____ (country/community). I/we would like to know if you have information about how many children below the age of 12 are involved in any economic activity, and how many other children are involved in work that may interfere with their education? Also, could you tell us exactly what our country's laws are on child labour?

I am writing to you because I/we are planning a series of community activities to raise awareness about HIV and AIDS and wondered if you have information fact sheets or booklets that we can distribute.

Writing to officials: If you are writing to a public official to give your views on a given issue it is important to show you have a good understanding of the subject, but as always, keep it brief and make sure you get your facts right. Do not be afraid to say why you care about this issue or to include personal experience if it is relevant. You should also include any suggestions you have for solutions to the problem — but do so respectfully. Ask the official about their own views and what action they are planning.

For example:

I am writing to you because I am very worried about the commercial sexual exploitation of children. I have read about this subject on UNICEF's website and in the press and I have also personally met a girl aged 15 who was offered a 'job' that turned out to involve sex.

It is terrible to think of people my own age whose lives are being ruined in this way. I know that young people have a right to be protected from abuse both under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and under the laws of our own country.

May I respectfully suggest two possible steps that might help with this problem? Firstly, to take more action to work with street children to find a solution, and secondly to set up a special force to track down the people who are behind the exploitation?

I would be very grateful if you would let me know your thoughts and proposals on this issue.

Writing to the media: writing to a newspaper, magazine, radio station or other media outlet can be a good way of expressing your views and raising awareness. Most local and national newspapers publish relevant letters from readers, and radio stations may have a programme dedicated to airing listeners' views. But there is a lot of competition for such outlets, so do not be disappointed if your letter is not chosen the first time you write. Contact details for readers' or listeners' letters are normally given on the relevant letters pages or at the beginning of a publication, at the beginning or end of a programme, and/or on the outlet's website. Address your letter 'To the editor' or 'To the producer' and then

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give the name of the publication or programme (in this case, it is not usual to use the person's name even if you know it).

If you are responding to a particular article or programme (and this will make it more likely that your letter will be used), give the date of the article or programme and the headline or title. As always, keep your letter brief and to the point, get your facts right, and express yourself as well as you can — it is always a good idea to ask someone else with good writing skills to read over what you have written, even if you are a good writer yourself. Include personal experiences and opinions, or try to find some other original approach to the subject.

For example:

I am writing in response to your article "Schools face funding cuts" on _____ (give exact date).

This is bad news for all students, but I wonder if you and your readers have considered the special implications for girls. Among 'developing' countries, including our own, 62.9 million girls are recorded as being out of school, as compared to 54.4 million boys. My friends and I conducted a survey that showed that nearly --% of girls in our local area are not regularly attending school. Any cut in resources is bound to make this situation worse.

I believe that giving all children an education should be a top priority. Until girls and women take their place as educated and valued members of our communities, our country will not only be denying a fundamental human right, but wasting a vital resource. No real success or development can be achieved with only half the population participating and contributing.

Remember to use the correct form for all your letters (see the Letter template).

Public speaking

Public speaking is a good way of getting your views and message across at meetings, special events and other gatherings.

It can be difficult to stand up and speak in front of other people. But this is an important skill if you want to get your message across.

Preparation

If you are going to deliver a set speech at an event or meeting, you should have time to prepare it word for word. Make sure you do the necessary research, and keep it fairly brief so you do not bore your audience (20 minutes should generally be quite long enough). You should also make sure to take into consideration who your audience is and what their interests are. Then use the following tips on structure and content.

In the introduction:

- If it is your event, thank people for coming.

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- Introduce yourself (give your name, age, group name and school if applicable).
- Introduce the issue that you are going to discuss.
- Try to grab your audience's attention straight away with a dramatic fact, statistic or a real life story.
- Give a very brief outline of what your speech will cover and why the issue is important to you.

In the main body of the speech:

- Make your content as concise and lively as you can, including examples involving real people. You could include an interesting or funny story that you have read about, or about something that has happened to you or someone you know. But beware trying to be funny about a sad subject or trying to make jokes if you are not comfortable with it. Try ideas out on other people first.
- Always bear your audience in mind. For example, you can be more informal if you are talking only to other young people than if your audience includes teachers, officials or other adults.
- Include vital facts from your research illustrating your main points.
- Say what you think should be done about the issue and what you and/or your group are trying to do.
- Say what you think the impact of these actions will be – and what the consequences are of not taking action.

In the conclusion:

- Sum up your main points.
- Explain how members of the audience can get involved.
- Say you will try to answer questions from members of the audience afterwards (if applicable).
- Thank people for listening.

Delivery

- Here are a few tips on delivering a speech successfully:
- Always memorize your speech! This will make it seem more spontaneous and allow you to make eye contact. Make a list of your main points to help you if you get stuck.
- Try to relax and not fidget.
- Speak slowly, loudly and clearly.

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- Look at your audience.
- Do not be afraid of showing that you feel deeply about the issue. Your enthusiasm and commitment will inspire others.
- Practise giving your speech in front of a mirror to see how you look and how it sounds.

Contributing to a discussion

Many of the tips on delivering a speech are also relevant to taking part in a discussion at a meeting or other event. If you know what the subject of the discussion is in advance, you can prepare exactly what you want to say, although the content should be much briefer. If you decide to make a spontaneous contribution during the course of a meeting or event, you can still try to work out what you will say in your head while someone else is speaking.

Events

*"We have to work from within and not wait for other people to do everything."
Youth from Peru*

You can take advantage of special events at school or in the community to spread your message. Ask for permission to display posters, distribute fact sheets and pamphlets, and perhaps even have a stall with games and prizes. You can also use events as an opportunity to engage people in discussion and pass on information in person.

Organizing your own event may be even more effective, but it will involve a lot of effort and organization: see Planning Projects.

Here are just a few ideas for events at which you can raise awareness and communicate information, whether or not you organize them yourself:

- **Rallies and fairs:** these are (you hope!) large gatherings with lots of stalls, activities and games.
- **Walks and marches:** organized walks and marches are another good way of attracting attention. You can carry posters or banners and hand out information leaflets. You could also arrange a sponsored walk to raise funds.
- **Concerts:** stage your own or ask for permission to hand out material at public concerts.
- **Sports events:** many successful groups use sports as a focal point for activities

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- **Theatrical events:** short dramas, comedy sketches and puppet shows are a good way of communicating information without boring people!

Posters and leaflets

Posters

Posters are a simple but effective way of publicizing events and communicating important messages to the public at large. They can be displayed at special events and at school or in the community.

Larger organizations involved in the issue you have chosen may have posters that you can use for public information. If you decide to create your own, try to make them attractive and easy to read, with appropriate pictures or graphics and one simple, memorable message in large lettering that will attract attention. You can also include more detailed information in smaller lettering, as in the HIV-awareness poster featured here. If you are making your own information posters, get them checked by someone who has expertise in the subject — someone who works or volunteers in a non-governmental organization or public office, for example, or a teacher. Remember to include contact information for your group. Think carefully about where you will put up your posters — try to find a location where lots of people will pass by but where they will not get lost in the crowd.

Flyers

Flyers — simple leaflets that you hand out to announce events — are also simple, direct and effective. Make sure you include all the necessary information and do not make mistakes. (It is a good idea to ask more than one person to check any written material intended for distribution.)

To be effective, flyers need to be distributed widely. You can hand out flyers in the street, distribute them door to door or leave piles of them in suitable locations, for example in a community hall.

Fact sheets and pamphlets

Information fact sheets and pamphlets are a good way of communicating detailed information, but they can be expensive to produce, and you need to make absolutely sure you get your facts right and express the information clearly. Again, larger organizations may well have developed suitable printed material that you can use. If you decide you want to develop your own, as with posters, you should consult suitable non-governmental organizations or public offices for advice, and try to find someone who is qualified to act as a consultant.

Using the media

Media coverage can reach a very large audience and is particularly effective for publicizing events, activities, and special projects that could count as 'news'.

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However, bear in mind that there is a lot of competition for media slots, so this should not be the only element in your communication strategy. Also, media items about small-scale initiatives tend to be brief, so this may not be the best way of communicating complex or detailed information.

The first step is to identify exactly what you or your group is trying to achieve through the media. Ask yourself:

- Who is your target audience?
- What message do you want to communicate?
- Which media outlet(s) would be the best for communicating your message — and the most likely to cover your story or event?

There are lots of different media: television, radio, the Internet, newspapers and magazines. You may find it easiest to get coverage on radio, particularly local radio, and radio programmes tend to cover stories in more depth than television. But written media — newspapers, magazines and websites — have the most scope for in-depth coverage of a wide range of stories, particularly if they are aiming at a local audience. You may also be able to get coverage on television by targeting outlets that already have youth programming.

Writing a press release

The standard way of telling the media about something you want them to cover is to 'issue' a 'press release' – a short piece of writing (one sheet of paper is standard) answering the following questions:

Who was / is involved?

What happened / will happen?

When did it / will it happen?

Where did it / will it happen?

Why did it / will it happen?

How did it / will it happen? ('How?' is not always relevant.)

The first paragraph should summarize the answers to these questions in one or two sentences. The second and third paragraphs should include your most interesting and quotable material, which reporters can use in an article. The rest of the release should give more detail and also some brief background information about your group: who you are, what your objectives are, and what you have already accomplished.

Remember, news outlets are looking for news, and for stories that grab people's attention. So press releases are most effective when they announce something new, deal with something that is topical, or provide 'human interest' — personal stories that will get people's attention.

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Make sure your press release contains contact information so that reporters can get in touch with you to find out more if they want to.

Before an event or the launch of a project, call the media outlet you want to reach, find out the name of the news editor, producer or specialized correspondents and gather contact information and other details. This will mean you can 'issue' your press release to the right people.

You also need to find out what the deadlines are for each media outlet. Give reporters as much notice as you can, and then remind them the day before the event.

You can also use press releases to give information after an event, for reporters who were unable to attend, and on completion of a sustained project.

Tips for press releases

Here are just a few suggestions for subjects for press releases:

- News of forthcoming events, activities and projects.
- News of successful completed events, activities and projects.
- New information you have uncovered — for example the result of a survey.
- Profiles of active community members — what they have done and why.
- Personal stories of people affected by the issue you want to publicize. (You must be sensitive when putting such a story together and respect people's wishes if they do not want to be identified. Always consider that person's privacy and personal safety, especially if they are under 18 years old.)

Sample press release

KIDS IN SCHOOL: STAR WRITER TO ADDRESS EDUCATION RALLY

[When?] On 21 January, at 3 pm, [Who?] Ms. _____ the successful author and former pupil at the local _____ School, [What?] will address a meeting [Where?] in the _____ Community Hall [Why?] in support of the fight to give all children an education. [How?] The meeting is organised by local campaigning group, Kids in School, of which the star author is the patron.

"The time has come for everyone to stand up and be counted on," Ms. _____ commented on accepting the invitation to speak. "And the time has come for all children – girls and boys – to be in full-time education. Education is not only crucial to the future of each young person, but to the future of our whole country."

The meeting has been called against a background of growing support for the campaign to give all children the education that is their right under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. But there is still much to be done. A recent survey, carried out by Kids in School among 150 local children, revealed that 20 per cent of girls and 12 per cent of boys under the age of 16 were not in full-time education. (A copy of the survey report is enclosed with this press release.)

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The meeting starts at 2.30 pm on 21 January and is open to all. Other speakers include the _____ School's head teacher, Mr _____, and _____ of Kids in School. Questions from the audience will be taken after Ms. _____'s speech.

Kids in School was formed in 2002 by a group of children at _____ School. As well as mounting an information campaign on the issue, and conducting the survey previously mentioned, the group has organized a service in which pairs of older children accompany young children on their journey to school, which, according to the head teacher, has had a noticeable impact on attendance figures. The group has also organized several fundraising projects towards the proposed new community sports and leisure space for young people.

Ms. _____ is probably best known for her book _____ and for her column in the _____ newspaper. She attended _____ School between 1980 and 1984 before going on to win a scholarship to _____ University.

Around the world, more than 121 million children of primary-school age are not in school. Nearly 54 per cent of those are girls. The gender gap is even bigger in secondary schools.

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals have set the target of making sure, preferably by the year 2005, that all children - girls and boys - have equal access to a quality education.

Further information:

Kids at School
c/o _____ School, Full Address
Telephone
E-mail

UNICEF: Girls Education
<http://www.unicef.org/girlseducation/index.html>
UNESCO: Education for All
www.unesco.org/education/efa

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FUNDRAISING

Introduction

Whether or not you want to try to raise funds, and how, will depend on local circumstances and what projects you are planning. Fundraising is certainly not essential for effective action: many of the successful information and education campaigns featured throughout this website and described on the message boards cost little or nothing.

If you want to raise general funds for a cause, the best option is to do so on behalf of an established non-governmental organization. Many organizations have fundraising campaigns that involve local volunteers and projects. Always contact an organization in advance: you must have their official permission to raise funds in their name.

Whether you are raising funds for an established organization or for a project of your own, through local events or by applying for a grant, remember the following guidelines:

- The purpose for which you are fundraising must be absolutely clear.
- Any money raised must be used for the stated purpose and no other.
- You should keep careful accounts of any money you raise and what you spend it on, recording even the smallest amounts.
- Any money raised must be kept safely, preferably in a bank account opened in the name of your group.
- It may be a good idea to ask a responsible adult to 'audit' your accounts, so there can be no question of misuse of funds.

There are many ways of raising funds, from simple collecting boxes and doing odd jobs to organizing sponsored walks and more elaborate events such as concerts and fairs.

Applying for funds

Many organizations around the world make small grants for specific local projects, although most will only give money to groups that are officially recognized as a charity.

Some organizations will make grants to smaller projects and causes, but all have certain minimum requirements, such as a properly constituted management committee. Grant-making organizations will have information leaflets about who can apply as well as standard application forms. It may be possible to team up with a local non-governmental organization so that they can apply on your behalf.

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You could also consider making proposals to local businesses — for example to donate materials or funds that you need for a specific project.

Tips on writing proposals

All applications for funds should be carefully prepared and include the following information:

- Information about you or your group and your mission.
- A detailed explanation of the project you are planning, including dates for completion.
- Details of exactly what you are applying for.
- Any recognition the donor will receive for their support (for example, acknowledgements in printed material, speeches, press releases and so on).
- Details of the full budget for your project and how you will fund anything not covered by the present application, if appropriate. This is very important — no one will want to contribute to a project unless there are realistic plans for covering all the costs. Also bear in mind that an organization may be more willing to provide funds if you have already raised money by other means, even if the amount is small.
- The name and contact details of a responsible adult to act as a adviser.

The basic format of the letter accompanying a grant application or funding proposal can follow the Letter template given earlier. If there is a standard application form for a grant, the body of your letter should give a brief outline of your project and say that you have enclosed an application form. If there is no application form, the body of your letter should include all the details listed above. Alternatively, you could say that you enclose a project proposal and give these details on a separate sheet of paper, headed with the name and contact details of your group and the name of your project.

If you are awarded any sort of grant or donation, you will have to provide a detailed report of the project and exactly how the money was spent on completion.

Sample funding proposal

Your name
Your group's name
Your address

Potential donor's name
Potential donor's address

Proposal: Name of Project

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The project

The Streetwise AIDS Awareness Club (see covering letter for our mission statement) is planning to stage a series of short plays and sketches to try to reduce discrimination against HIV-positive people. We have already got permission to use the _____ school hall, and Ms _____, a representative of the local non-governmental organization _____, is acting as our script consultant and adviser (see below). The performances will take place on 24 and 25 June of this year. If the project is successful, we plan to stage more plays during the next school term.

The budget

We will be making all the props and costumes ourselves, but there will be a few costs in staging our production. These break down as follows:

Photocopying (leaflets, posters and tickets) ____
Refreshments ____
Postage and stationery ____

We have already raised ____ by doing odd jobs, and would be very grateful if your organization would consider donating ____ for the cost of photocopying our leaflets, posters and tickets (samples enclosed). We have also applied to _____ for help with the cost of refreshments.

If you decided to make a donation, we would name you as a sponsor on all our photocopied material.

For further information, please contact us at the address above, or contact our referee:

Name and full contact details for adviser

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REVIEW

It is very important to have a thorough review of any action you take to judge its success and learn from your experience.

A review is also a good opportunity to check that you have done everything you need to do.

You should already have considered, at the planning stage, how you will judge whether or not the project was a success (see Planning projects in Getting organized).

Preparation and planning

In a review, ask yourself the following questions:

- Did we do the necessary research?
- Did we complete our project planning and organization on schedule?
- Did we involve enough members in planning the project and carrying it out?
- Did we consult everyone we should have?
- Did we anticipate all of the problems we experienced?
- Did we budget the right amount?

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- Did the project start on time?
- Did it go according to plan?
- Did we stay within our budget?
- How well did it fulfil the goals we set for it? For example:
 - How many people attended?
 - Did we reach our target audience? If so, how?
 - How effectively did we get our message across? If so, how do we know?
 - Did we raise any money we hoped to raise?
 - Did we complete the work we set out to do?
 - What comments and suggestions did guests or other club members make?
 - What might have made the project more successful?
 - Did we send a report reviewing the project to our sponsoring organization(s)?

Finally, have you told us all about your project in Speak out?

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IDEAS FOR PROJECTS: THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Start an awareness campaign

About what?

- Teaching girls to protect themselves against sexual violence, abuse and rape (MDG 3)
- Using insecticide-treated bed nets to prevent infant deaths (MDGs 4 and 6)
- Preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS and dispelling myths and stereotypes about the syndrome (MDG 6)
- Making water safe and drinkable (MDG 7)

How?

- Choose an issue that affects your community and that you care about.
- Discuss the issue with your friends and family. You may even want to arrange a community meeting.
- Do your research. Learn everything you can about the issue you have chosen, including the causes and possible solutions. Consult adults and experts.
- Prepare campaign materials to help spread the word, including flyers, pamphlets, posters, videos, etc.
- Present and distribute your campaign materials to neighbors, schools, businesses, and at community meetings.
- Follow up. Think of a way to monitor whether the problem is improving due to your awareness campaign.
- Continue to improve and expand your campaign!

Teach a class

About what?

- Proper nutrition and hygiene (MDGs 1 and 7)
- How adolescent girls should take care of their bodies during pregnancy (MDG 5)
- Protecting against HIV/AIDS and other preventable diseases (MDG 6)
- How to protect our environment (MDG 7)

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How?

- Choose an issue that affects your community and that you care about.
- Make a list of people you want to invite to the classes. Invite individuals affected by the issue as well as those who are knowledgeable about the issue. Don't forget to get parental consent for the participants.
- Choose a comfortable and convenient location to host your classes.
- Do your research. Consult with knowledgeable adults and experts, hold discussions, and learn everything you can about the issue you have chosen, including causes and solutions.
- Prepare materials for the class and then conduct the classes.
- Follow up. Ask participants for advice on how to improve the class, invite new participants and guest speakers, and continue to educate others!

Hold a fundraiser

For what?

- To buy school supplies for children (MDG 2)
- To get Anti-Retroviral Therapy for HIV positive children (MDG 6)
- To have a well dug for safe drinking water (MDG 7)
- To install proper bathrooms (latrines, for example) in schools (MDGs 2 and 7)

How?

- Assess community need; the project you choose should not only be something you care about, but something that is needed in your community.
- Gather a team. Recruit friends and peers with similar interests and concerns and with a desire to help make a difference!
- Choose your fundraising event: clothing/food/school supply drive, concert, party, performance, car wash, bake sale (keep in mind the different costs of each event).
- Determine what you need to hold your fundraiser. Try first to get whatever you can donated, and then determine what else is needed and how much it will cost.
- The money you raise, minus the costs of the event, should be equal to (or greater than!) your fundraising goal.

Guide to Action

- Organize and hold your event. Be sure to tell everyone your fundraising goal and what the funds will be used for.

Write a petition

For what?

- To ensure that every child has access to primary school (MDG 2)
- To request free HIV/AIDS tests at your local hospital/health clinic (MDG 6)
- To ask for the installation of a permanent safe drinking water system in your community (MDG 7)
- To ask your government to live up to the promises it made about the Millennium Development Goals (MDG 8)

How?

- Choose an issue that affects your community and that you care about.
- Determine whose attention you need: media, city council, congressional representatives or other government officials, school board, local sanitation committee, etc.
- Write your petition. Get advice from a local community service group.
- Ask your friends, family, neighbors, teachers and fellow students to sign your petition.
- Set up a table in a public space with your petition to get even more signatures.
- Consider organizing a rally to emphasize your petition.
- Don't forget to follow up, and remember that being politically active in your community is important.

Perform a play

For what?

- To show parents the importance of sending their children to school (MDG 2)
- To promote awareness of the impact of HIV/AIDS on young people (MDG 6)
- To show how early marriage and pregnancy hurts girls (MDGs 3 and 5)
- To show how good jobs for young people help improve their lives (MDG 8)

Guide to Action

How?

- Choose an issue that affects your community and that you care about.
- Find other people to help: friends, classmates, drama students, etc.
- Research the issue and write a script. Get any costumes and props you need.
- Remember that practice makes perfect!
- Find a place to perform the play: school auditorium or gymnasium, local theater, etc.
- Promote your performance, and consider whether you want to make it a fundraiser (you could ask the audience for donations, for example).
- Perform the play and then hold a discussion about the issues