

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

OBSERVING WORLD AIDS DAY

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World AIDS Day was first conceived in August 1987, by James W Bunn and Thomas Netter, two public information officers for the Global programme on AIDS at the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland.

Bunn and Netter took their idea to Dr. Jonathan Mann, Director of Global Programme on AIDS, now known as UNAIDS. Dr. Mann liked the concept, approved it, and agreed with the recommendation that, the first observance of World AIDS day should be 1st December 1988.

The main aim of World AIDS Day was to educate common person on the road about all true facts and recent advances about HIV/AIDS.¹ Doctors, NGOs on World AIDS Day organize school children parades, cultural programmes, road shows, conferences and meetings, with all means of IEC – Information, Education and Counselling activities. These activities bring down common person's fear. They will be able to come not only forward for checkup and treatment but will also be able to encourage their family members and their friends to do so.

Dr. Jonathan Mann selected 1st December as World AIDS Day. He gave 3 reasons for selecting 1st December, 1) Easy to remember, like 1st, 15th, or 30th. 2) It is not coinciding with any nation's day of celebrations. 3) It is not close to any long holidays. 1st December satisfied all three criteria¹.

World Health Organization announces a theme about HIV/AIDS every year. Doctors deliver talks on HIV/AIDS using this theme and explaining all other facts about HIV/AIDS. World AIDS Day theme is chosen by the World AIDS campaign's Global Steering Committee, after extensive consultation with people, organizations, and Government agencies involved in the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS. The Global steering committee decides the World AIDS theme, once a year since 1988 till 2005.

However in 2005, the Committee decided to have one theme for the next 5 years, thus for 2005 to 2010 one theme was "STOP AIDS, KEEP PROMISES". This overarching theme was designed to encourage political leaders to keep their commitment to achieve universal access to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support by the year 2010.

In 2011, the theme announced on September 9th 2011, at Cape Town, South Africa was "Getting to Zero". Zero new HIV infections, Zero discrimination, and Zero AIDS related deaths. Zero new HIV infection means no more new cases. The chain of transmission has to be stopped,

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safe sex to be practiced and safe blood banking to be practiced. Zero discrimination means no more social stigma to be practiced. Zero AIDS related deaths mean all HIV positive patients should get Anti-Retroviral drugs and treatment for opportunistic infections.

Year wise WHO themes on World AIDS Day from 1988 till date^{2, 3}

Year	Theme
1988	Communication.
1989	Youth.
1990	Women and AIDS.
1991	Sharing the challenge.
1992	Community commitment.
1993	Time to act.
1994	AIDS and the Family.
1995	Shared Rights, Shared Responsibility.
1996	One World, One Hope.
1997	Children living in a world with AIDS.
1998	Force for change – World AIDS campaign with young people.
1999	Listen, Learn, Live – World AIDS campaign with children and Young people.
2000	AIDS – Men make a difference.
2001	I care, do you?
2002	Stigma and Discrimination.
2003	Stigma and Discrimination. (Live and let live)
2004	Women, Girls, HIV and AIDS.
2005 to 2010	Stop AIDS, keep the promises.
2011 to 2015	Getting to zero. Zero new HIV infection, Zero discrimination, and Zero AIDS related death.

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- 3) Year book of the United Nations 2005, vol 59, Geneva, Switzerland, United Nation's publications, 2007.

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