

Why Become an Advocate?

The Importance of Advocacy

Advocacy is about speaking out for those whose voices have not been heard. On their own, the voices of the poor and marginalized are too often ignored and forgotten. Advocacy is about working on *behalf of* and *together with* the most powerless people in society to speak out for their rights and needs.

In the fight against AIDS, advocacy is a strategic and significant tool for bringing about positive change. The Acting on AIDS campaign invites young adults to become advocates and to train others to become advocates. When many voices join together in one call, there is a greater chance that our leaders will be forced to listen and take action.

The key to successful advocacy is in understanding how to leverage the power we have as Canadian citizens to raise our voices and influence government policy for the benefit of others. Using the influence of our citizenship can be done in creative, simple, and effective ways. (More details can be found in document “4a – Tools of Advocacy”.)

Advocacy: getting to the root of the problem

Charitable giving is necessary to provide the immediate support and resources needed for prevention, care and treatment for those affected by AIDS. But more is needed to get to the root of the problem. The causes leading to the AIDS pandemic in poor nations are linked to poverty and require structural change in governments and policies.

Canadians give generously in the aftermath of emergency situations such as the Asian tsunami. These donations are vital, but we also have the responsibility to use our voices to promote justice for those who are most vulnerable, such as those who have been orphaned by AIDS.

Those committed to reducing the spread of HIV, and to ensuring those affected by AIDS have adequate care, must encourage leaders to adopt policy changes and provide adequate funding levels for programs that both respond to immediate health care needs and address the structural issues that keep people oppressed by poverty. When such changes are made, lives are saved and justice can thrive.

An Invitation to Respond

Edmund Burke, an 18th century Scottish statesman and writer, said, “*All that is necessary for evil to succeed is for good men to do nothing.*” The AIDS pandemic has reached crisis proportions and doing nothing or staying silent are no longer options. Now is the time to take a stand against injustice and to act on behalf of the oppressed like never before. For some concrete ways to begin doing this, go to section “4a – Advocacy Tools”.

