



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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27TH WORLDWIDE AIDS CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL INSPIRES COMMUNITIES AND UPHOLDS HUMAN RIGHTS

WASHINGTON, D.C. – For the 27th time in the history of the AIDS pandemic, the annual International AIDS Candlelight Memorial will be marked in communities around the world by a vibrant display of community activism and solidarity Sunday, May 16, 2010. Some 1,200 organizations in 109 countries are expected to participate in the event.

This year's theme for the Memorial is "Many Lights for Human Rights," which the Global Health Council hopes will circulate globally to promote greater understanding about the legal barriers marginalized communities can face in obtaining access to antiretroviral treatment and care, HIV prevention services and basic healthcare, including for HIV-related diseases like tuberculosis and malaria. Countries involved include some of the oldest hosts of the Candlelight Memorial (like the Philippines), some of the largest (Nigeria) and some of those with the highest burden (Swaziland).

The Candlelight Memorial, started in 1983 in the United States, is the world's oldest grassroots movement against the disease and one of the largest public health campaigns in the world today. A program of the Global Health Council led by volunteer community-based organizations, the Candlelight Memorial is meant to remember those who have lost their lives to AIDS, to support those living with HIV and affected by its impact and to move communities to action. Memorials – ranging from small gatherings beneath a tree to multi-day national events – are planned throughout the year by volunteers on the frontlines of the pandemic.

"The Candlelight Memorial is as necessary today as it was nearly three decades ago," said Global Health Council President and CEO Jeffrey L. Sturchio. "With over 33 million people living with HIV and a new generation of youth emerging every day, we must continue to create public space to learn from the past and motivate actions to improve our approach to HIV and other global health challenges in the future. That's what the Memorial offers us."

One of the key ways the Candlelight Memorial aims to change that approach is by developing the capacity of the hundreds of volunteer organizations who register with the program each year. Through guides, factsheets and online services, as well as leadership development activities, the Council is using the traditionally one-day event to promote a year-round program fostering cross-cutting technical skills essential for addressing broader social change.

HIV/AIDS is part of the Council's comprehensive global health agenda and one of the most important issues around which the organization engages its diverse members and partners in advancing global health policy: <http://tinyurl.com/28a3sef>

A special Twitter feed (tweet to #AIDSCandlelight) has been designed this year to follow the memorials and that feed can be followed on the Council website.

To learn more about the Global Health Council and the Candlelight Memorial, visit www.candlelightmemorial.org.

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The Global Health Council is the world's largest membership alliance of public health organizations and professionals dedicated to saving lives by improving health throughout the world. The Council's members work in 140 countries on six continents. www.globalhealth.org