



PRESS RELEASE

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OPENING CEREMONY OF INTERNATIONAL AIDS CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL TO BE HELD IN MALAWI IN MAY 2008

MOBILIZATION SEASON BEGINS FOR COMMUNITY LEADERS WORLDWIDE

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Global Health Council announces the beginning of the mobilization season for community leaders preparing for the International AIDS Candlelight Memorial, one of the oldest and largest worldwide civil society events focused on HIV/AIDS awareness and advocacy. The 2008 event, to be held May 18, marks the 25th anniversary of the Candlelight Memorial. This year's opening ceremony will be held in Lilongwe, Malawi, one of several sub-Saharan African countries hard hit by this disease.

The 2008 opening ceremony will be co-hosted by the Global Health Council and MANET+ (the Malawi Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS), with the support of other local, national and international partners. MANET+ was chosen as the Council's partner for this special event in recognition of the organization's leadership in providing support to people living with HIV/AIDS and its history of successfully coordinating Candlelight Memorials.

The International AIDS Candlelight Memorial began in 1983 when a few men in San Francisco decided to hold a memorial and march to bring public attention to a mysterious disease that was causing early and unexplained deaths. Over the years, the Candlelight Memorial spread beyond the United States. In 2007, the Candlelight Memorial was commemorated by small and large groups in more than 1,500 events held in 119 countries, including Malawi.

“Our partnership with MANET+ in Malawi has given the Global Health Council the opportunity to move the opening ceremony of the Candlelight Memorial to a country that is facing a daunting public health challenge with courage and commitment,” said Todd Lawrence, international coordinator of the Candlelight Memorial program at the Global Health Council. “We have seen impressive cooperation exhibited by many civil society organizations working to stop HIV/AIDS on the ground in Malawi as well as a strong working partnership between civil society and the government of Malawi. This is exactly the kind of coordinated effort that can serve as a positive example to other countries working to stop the pandemic.”

The opening ceremony of the Candlelight Memorial will be held in Lilongwe, Malawi's capital city, and will include the lighting of the official candle to kickoff memorial programs being held around the world.

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***The Global Health Council** is the world's largest membership alliance dedicated to saving lives by improving health throughout the world. The Council serves and represents thousands of public health professionals working in more than 100 countries on six continents. www.globalhealth.org*

*For more information about the **International AIDS Candlelight Memorial**, please go to www.candlelightmemorial.org or contact the International Coordinator, Todd Lawrence at tlawrence@globalhealth.org. To learn more about the opening ceremony in Malawi, contact Victor Kamanga, acting executive director of MANET+ at victorkamanga@yahoo.com or vkamanga@manetplus.com.*