Inspiring Ways to Spread the Word
A Guide on Raising Awareness

To solve the world’s problems we must first understand the issues and then share our knowledge with others. This way we make sure that everyone is educated about the challenges and can make informed action plans to work toward a solution. Awareness actions are a great way to get people thinking about the issues affecting our global friends.

Whether you are working alone, with your school or with your community, there are many ways to raise awareness on an issue you feel passionately about. Here are some great ideas to help you get started:

**On your own**

1. **Educate Yourself**
   Read the newspaper, watch the news and ask your family, friends and teachers for their thoughts and opinions. A great place to start is with Global Voices, a weekly column about social and global issues that appears every Monday at www.thestar.com/news/globalvoices.

2. **Express Yourself**
   Write a letter to the editor of a local paper on an issue you feel strongly about.

3. **Move from “me” to “we”**
   Lead by example and show others what kind of difference one person can make. Do this by buying fair trade products, giving gifts that make a difference or picking up litter in your neighbourhood.

4. **Try New Things**
   Explore other cultures by trying new foods, listening to music from around the world or attend a cultural festival or event.

**With a group (your school or with members from your community)**

1. **Take the Vow of Silence**
   Stay silent for 24 hours in solidarity with the millions of children silenced by poverty and exploitation. Carry information sheets explaining why you are silent to educate others about children’s rights. Your silence will speak to the world! Bonus: Collect pledges for every hour that you remain silent. For more information on Free The Children’s Vow of Silence campaign, visit http://www.freethechildren.com/we/vowofsilence/.

2. **Speak Out**
   Let your voice be heard! Prepare a speech on an issue you are passionate about. Ask school teachers and administrators for the opportunity to speak to classes during morning announcements or at assemblies. If it’s an assembly you can:
   - Include a slideshow full of pictures and facts
   - Show a video clip
   - Present a skit
   - Have the choir sing a song of hope
   - Invite an expert to come and speak to your class/school
3. Use Your Words
Spread your message by using statistics, powerful messages and quotations. With permission, chalk the sidewalk outside of your school, write a message in the snow using food coloring or environmentally-friendly paint, change all of the screensavers on your school's computers to spread your message, get up early and write on every blackboard and put up attention-grabbing posters. You can also ask local business owners for permission to put posters up in their store windows or on public notice boards!

4. Be a Statistic
Use your entire school to visually represent a shocking statistic. For example, one out of every three people in the world lives on less than $2 US per day. To illustrate this statistic in a powerful way, give armbands or another symbol to one out of three students at your school to wear on the same day.

5. Host a Film Series
Organize the screening of a series of films that focus on an issue of social justice. Bonus: Ask for donations in lieu of a fee and collect funds toward your fundraising goal.

6. Hold an Art Exhibit
Create artwork (either on your own, as a Youth in Action Group or invite submissions from your school and from local artists in your community) based on a specific global issue. Then get permission to display the art in the front schoolyard or hall so that all students may see the exhibit as they come and go from school. With permission, you can also move the exhibition to a location where the larger community tends to visit, like the community centre or library, a popular restaurant or in the window of a local grocery store. Keep in mind that art isn’t just paintings and drawings. Encourage all artists to explore the issues through song, poetry, video or audio journals. Bonus: At the end of the exhibit, auction the artwork one piece at a time and collect money toward your fundraising goal.

7. Throw a T-shirt Decorating Party
Ask each guest to bring an old T-shirt and write powerful and inspiring messages on each other's shirts. For extra fun, use glow in the dark pens. Then, wear them proudly. Bonus: Sell the shirts or auction them off and collect money toward your fundraising goal.

Tips for effective posters
There are so many posters out there it can be challenging to be sure that yours is getting noticed. Here some tips to help you make posters that stand out from the crowd:

- Make your poster big enough that people can see it from a distance.
- Cut your poster paper into a fun funky shape.
- Choose a bright colored background.
- Make your words stand out by using a color that contrasts with the background.
- Use as few words as possible to get your point across. Be sure to include your contact information.
- Be creative with where you put your posters.
- Be sure to get permission before you put up your poster, otherwise they may get torn down.
- Try to use recycled paper or think of ways to make paperless posters.

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I was brought up to believe that the only thing worth doing was to add to the sum of accurate information in the world.
—Margaret Mead, US anthropologist (1901 - 1978)
8. Hold a Fair Trade Fair
After researching the issue of fair trade, ask a fair trade company to donate coffee, tea or hot chocolate to your group or club. Entice fellow students or community members to learn about the importance of buying fair trade by offering free and delicious fair trade beverages. Bonus: Ask for a small donation with each free beverage and raise some money as you go! Go one step further: Create a fair trade guide with information on how we can make a difference by making responsible purchases. Include a list of all of the local businesses that sell fair trade, sweatshop-free, organic, environmentally-friendly and locally-produced products.

9. Host an International Dinner
Research the history, culture and current social challenges of a country or region in which you’re interested. Share information and ideas over a delicious traditional meal from that area. Add a special touch by playing music from that region.

10. Share Frank Food Facts
Collect facts on hunger and malnutrition. Write the facts on cards and place them strategically throughout your cafeteria—at tables or next to the food—as a powerful reminder of the challenges faced by millions of people every day. Note: You can collect and display facts for any issue.

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**Seven tips on holding a successful awareness campaign**

1. Do your research. In order to make a difference you have to know what you are fighting for. Take the time to learn about all of the different sides of the issue you want to raise awareness of.
2. Be creative. Before you can raise awareness you first have to find a way to grab people’s attention. But remember: the goal of any awareness actions should be to empower people so that they want to get involved, rather than to make them feel guilty.
3. Use your gifts and talents. Put your gifts to use by choosing to combine your talent for music, drawing, drama, etc. with your passion for change. Need some inspiration? Check out the Creative Corner on the We Generation, Free The Children’s youth hub for global change, at www.freethechildren.com/we.
4. Tell people the most important facts or statistics about the issue you are raising awareness about. Telling them all the facts might overwhelm them.
5. Let people know where to find more information. Be sure to provide reliable sources so that they can learn more about the issue.
6. Provide an easy way for people to take action and support your cause.
7. Have fun!

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**Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.**

—Buddha, Indian philosopher and religious leader (563 BC - 483 BC)
This section is designed to help you create the best plan possible so that your awareness actions go off without a hitch! Here are some questions to help you create the best plan possible!

**WHAT is your ultimate goal?**

Is it to inspire, to educate or to encourage people to take action? Keep your answer to this question in mind throughout the entire planning process. It will help you stay focused so that all of your actions will help you achieve this goal!

**WHO is involved?**

One person can change the world, but having help makes planning a big awareness campaign a lot easier and a lot more fun. Begin by creating a core team of leaders who will help you plan out all of the logistics, as well as a team of volunteers who can help make your plan into a reality.

It is important to keep your target audience in mind while planning your awareness campaign. For example, a booth at a community event would help you reach out to your neighbours, while an announcement campaign at your school would reach all of your fellow students.

**WHAT do we need?**

Determine what supplies you will need, like paper for posters (use recycled!), music, buttons or ribbon. Also note any extra support you might need from parents or teachers. Don’t forget to get permission before you start putting your plan into action.

**WHERE will the awareness action take place?**

Find a great location and book it well in advance. Contact the person responsible for the desired location as soon as possible (i.e. get permission from your principal in order to use the school gym, or contact the manager in order to book space at a local community centre). This will ensure the venue you want is available for your event.

If you are planning on doing a poster campaign, determine where you want to put up your posters and get permission to use that wall space for your campaign.

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**Best practices for making announcements**

Announcements are a great way to get the word out. Here are some tips to make sure that people pay attention and listen to your message.

- Grab their attention with a powerful quote or statistic that makes people stop and want to hear you out.
- Keep it short and simple.
- Try something different like making your announcement into a song, a poem, or use an interesting voice or accent.
- Do a series of announcements based on one theme. Try announcing a different statistic every day, or give students a different action they can take to make a difference.

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**Sometimes it falls upon a generation to be great. You can be that great generation.**

—Nelson Mandela, S. African black civil rights leader (1918 - )
WHEN will this take place?

Find a date that works best for your team. Be weather-savvy: If you would like your event to be outdoors, make sure it is during a warm and sunny time of the year! The earlier you decide on a date, the more likely you will be able to get everything ready in time.

HOW will this happen?

Use your creativity and set an example of global consciousness every step of the way! Be aware of how the materials used in your campaign have affected others and the environment. For example, use fair trade coffee at your coffeehouse, vintage or sweatshop-free clothes in your fashion show and avoid Styrofoam cups or plates at your international food fair. Any campaign can be an ethical campaign.

Now make a schedule to make it happen!

Now that you know what you need to do in order to turn your fantastic awareness ideas into action, create a schedule to lay out what tasks need to be completed by a certain deadline and by a certain person/group. Schedules will ensure you are on track to achieve long-term goals.

Raising funds while you carry out awareness activities is easier than you think! For great tips on fundraising, check out Free The Children’s fundraising guide at (insert link here).

Raising Awareness vs. Advocacy

In accordance with national charity law, Free The Children does not support any advocacy work, and consequently, Youth in Action Groups cannot partake in any of these activities. Advocacy activities include petitions, boycotts, protests, letters to government officials, etc. Please be sure to contact your youth coordinator if you have any questions about this policy.

Let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation.