

Hi again,

Thank you for your thoughts and comments.

I would totally agree with Vanessa, who talks about the importance of making dance and performance culturally relevant to the particular audience. As an international project we are well aware at Dance4Life that although someone like DJ Tiesto is a great global ambassador with many fans, this fan base is primarily limited to certain countries, mostly in the North, where electronic music is hugely popular. Dance4life projects and events are each very different depending on the country and aim to represent a range of dance and movement from that country. I talked yesterday about the importance of making a 'heart connection' with young people, that can only be done if the type of dance is appealing, recognisable and relevant to them. I would say that the whole performance is relevant for this, including costumes, staging, and lighting but the aim of all of this is to connect emotionally with the group/audience. I would agree that the actual messages that can be communicated directly through a performance are limited BUT dance workshops working with large groups can inspire and develop a whole range of skills including communication skills, assertiveness, confidence and self awareness. It is these that will help people most when they are trying to put their choices into practice. As you can see on dance floors across the world every night, dance does bring people together and builds a sense of community and for those of us hoping to build a movement for change is a great tool.

As a more general response to several comments, the most important thing, whatever medium we are working with, is to recognise that mediums particular strengths and weaknesses. Mass media campaigns and television can reach huge amounts of people but with relatively simple messages. Leaflets and booklets reach less people but contain more detailed information. One to one counselling or group work can explore very personal issues and ways to change an individuals behaviour but there will never be enough resources to ensure everyone has access to this. The most effective interventions are therefore those which combine all elements of this, ensuring that those at highest need are those that have access to the more resource intensive elements such as workshops but that messages to reinforce and increase knowledge are available to a more general population through mass media.

That is why forums such as this are so valuable, promoting partnership as they do and encouraging us to look for ways we can link what we are doing with activities undertaken by colleagues around the world. For example, when we know a particular theme is going to be covered by a TV soap or MTV programme, we can extend its worth by incorporating that theme into our workshops, theatre/dance performances, events or outreach sessions. But maybe I'm starting to stray slightly off topic!

So moving on to today's discussion in which I'd like us to explore the role of events and concerts in HIV prevention and Sexual and reproductive health

Big events and concerts have been used for many years to promote messages, raise awareness and fundraise for different causes. But just how valuable are they? High profile events and concerts such as Live 8 and 46664 have created a huge amount of press interest and raised public awareness of important issues such as poverty. However, once the media attention has died down how much impact have they actually had? Even celebrities involved have different ideas about this:

“Are you ready, London? Are you ready to start a revolution? Are you ready to change history”? – Madonna at Live 8

“We're making a difference in the world not just for a moment but forever” . – Stevie Wonder
Compare these with the thoughts of Noel Gallagher of Oasis!

He says, "Correct me if I'm wrong, but are they hoping that one of these guys from the G8 is on a quick 15 minute break at Gleneagles (in Scotland) and sees ANNIE LENNOX singing SWEET DREAMS and thinks, 'F**k me, she might have a point there, you know?'

"KEANE doing SOMEWHERE ONLY WE KNOW and some Japanese businessman going, 'Aw, look at him... we should really f**king drop that debt, you know.'

"It's not going to happen, is it?"

What do you think?

Every 2 years (on the Saturday before World AIDS Day) Dance4Life puts on large scale events in the different countries it is active in. Linked together by satellite and involving international and national celebrities such as Dance4Life International Ambassador, DJ Tiesto, these events have the following aims:

- * To introduce content around HIV and sexual health in an attractive and engaging way.
- * To provide a reward to all those young people who have got actively involved in Dance4Life and undertaken activities which push back HIV and AIDS within their communities.
- * To create a sense of global unity amongst young people from different countries, as all dressed in white, they dance together at the same time, seeing each other via satellite.
- * To make a visible statement to political leaders that the youth of the world demand that their promises around the Millennium Development Goals are kept.

The Dance4Life approach to events therefore is to ensure they have a value in their own right, as a reward for getting involved and with an educational component. Nobody can buy a ticket, those in attendance have all earned their ticket by getting involved in an activity to push back HIV and AIDS. Those celebrities and icons on stage need to really be able to connect with young people for example Bono, Stevie Wonder and Bob Geldof are all great artists but they are not generally recognised as youth icons. Then as the events grow in size and take place in more and more countries the value of connecting young people and giving them a voice to put pressure on policy makers and leaders can be developed.

Putting on large scale events and concerts obviously takes a huge amount of time and resources and may well be outside the capabilities of many organisations. However, large dance parties and concerts are put on all over the world by private organisers and there are ways HIV and sexual health organisations may be able to have a presence at these existing events, providing speakers, stalls, written information for goody bags etc. Or, going back to what I was saying earlier, by running workshops or smaller campaigns which build on the themes of the event.

So, to some discussion points:

How valuable do you think big events such as Live 8 and 46664 have been. Do they make a difference?

In what ways can content and messaging be incorporated into the concert/event format?

Final word for today to Bono:

“Live 8 was, and remains a brilliant moment but what is more important is the brilliant movement of which it was a part. This gives the poorest of the poor real political muscle for the first time.

It is this movement of church people and trade unionists, soccer moms and student activists, that will carry the spirit of Live 8 on. It is this movement, not rock stars, that will make it untenable in the future to break promises to the most vulnerable people on this planet.

That was always why we put on the concerts.”