

23 February 2024

## Guideline: Celebrating International Days

Recognising and celebrating international days is important for many Team Up-supported programs and other sport for development initiatives globally. This guideline offers suggestions to help organisations ensure that international day celebrations have meaningful positive impact and add value.

International days provide an opportunity to amplify the work of your program and create visibility.

They are also a good platform to launch or upscale work in a particular area, for example gender and disability.

International days can be commemorated internally within your organisation, with your broader program community, or at a public event.

### International days of particular importance to Team Up-supported programs

**8 March** – International Women’s Day

**21 March** – World Down Syndrome Day

**2 April** – World Autism Awareness Day

**6 April** – International Day of Sport for Development and Peace

**8 August** – Safe Sport Day

**12 August** – International Youth Day

**10 October** – World Mental Health Day

**11 October** – International Day of the Girl Child

**20 November** – World Children’s Day

**25 November** – International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

**3 December** – International Day of People with Disability

Events centred around international days can be used to celebrate your achievements and build understanding of aspects of your work that are not prominently featured in your daily activities, for example creating awareness on invisible forms of disabilities. However, tokenistic, and poorly planned international day events risk undermining the meaningful impact of your work or, at worst, doing harm.

### Guidelines for celebrating international days

- View international days as a **catalyst for change**, not just an opportunity for a symbolic activity or gesture.
- The **representation** of the community being recognised by the international day should be substantive and not tokenistic. For example, at an event for International Day of People with Disability the speakers should be people with disability. For an International Women’s Day event, the majority (if not all) speakers should be people who identify as women.

- Ensure at least 10 per cent of **participants** in all international day events are people with a disability, as this reflects the population at large. For International Day of People with Disability events, the percentage of participants with a disability is likely to be higher.
- Consider how **relevant** the international day is to your program before planning an event. Recognising a day that does not clearly align with your program focus can appear tokenistic.
- Leverage the international day as a **platform** to amplify and showcase your relevant work. Link it closely to your work and focus, rather than acknowledging it in general terms.
- **Do not tokenise** international days with novelty activities or themed cake cutting unless this is accompanied by a substantive event or activity. Be mindful that 'celebratory' gestures without substantive speakers or activities can invisibilise (undermine) or cause harm to survivors or victims of violence or vulnerable communities.
- Ensure any speaker(s) you invite have an **appropriate background and standing** in the community. For example, ensure that they are not sexual perpetrators nor have a history of violence nor display toxic masculinity attributes.
- **Do no harm** with your events or activities.
- **Refrain from using a charitable or charity-based approach** to activities and events. This means to limit donations of money, food or clothing and avoid thinking of a vulnerable group as lacking agency. Use a rights-based approach in your international day events and activities by providing dignity to vulnerable groups you engage with. This includes making sure your activities talk or highlight structural injustices and foster collective action from different groups (inviting a range of stakeholders). A rights-based approach also means including relevant government agencies and incorporating international human rights instruments.

### Examples of meaningful activities related to International Women's Day

- Invite women leaders and activists to speak on an issue relevant to the audience. For example, an interactive session for school children on consent and/or healthy relationships, or an interactive session for adults on sexual harassment.
- Develop and launch a sexual harassment policy for your sports organisation.
- Do an awareness session with staff/coaches/trainers and/or communities on toxic masculinity and how it manifests in sports.
- Create awareness materials with sports role models on technology-facilitated violence and socialise the materials in schools/communities where you work.

### Examples of meaningful activities related to International Day of People with Disability

- Invite people with disability to speak on an issue relevant to the audience. For example, an interactive session with school children or young people on the different forms of disabilities. Or a panel discussion featuring people with disability speaking about challenges in accessing sports and recreational activities - this could be done for sports organisations, policy makers and government to influence change.
- Conduct an accessibility audit of your program, organisation or sporting venues and highlight this exercise through media platforms to encourage other sports organisations to do similar, or share findings with government agencies to influence them to take action on improving sporting venue access.
- Invite disability rights organisations to share information and knowledge on international human rights instruments and policies on disability rights and justice.
- Collaborating with other sports and developing an advocacy campaign to address stigma associated with people with disability and launching it on the international day.