



Food and HIV: medicine alone is not enough

Food and HIV: the issues

Food security, that is vital for all, has a particular significance for people living with HIV. An adequate diet can help them stay healthy and reduce their vulnerability to AIDS-related diseases. Without adequate food, an individual's response to antiretrovirals (ARVs) can be undermined; the frequency of opportunistic infections increase; and the progression of AIDS-related illnesses hasten. Providing medicine alone, therefore, is not enough – adequate food and nutrition are essential elements of HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.

HIV also has an impact on food security. At the household level, AIDS-related diseases can limit people's energy levels and ability to work and earn money to buy food. Time and household resources, particularly those of women, are also consumed by caring for sick family members. At the community level, HIV and AIDS reduce the number of productive people in the labor force and limit agricultural output, further reducing food security. Social exclusion and discrimination also increases the vulnerability of people affected by HIV and AIDS to hunger.

In turn, a lack of food or income may force people to prioritize buying food over ARVs, and thus reduce the effectiveness of HIV treatment further. Food insecurity, limited earning options or resources, and conflict or other emergencies can also increase people's vulnerability to HIV as they can lead to higher-risk behaviors such as engaging in sex for food or money.

These cyclical linkages call for comprehensive approaches to both ensuring food security for all and to achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.

Food and HIV: faith challenge

How can we, as people of faith, respond to the call to care for each other by making sure all are fed?



Food and HIV: advocacy asks and actions

The right to food for all, including for vulnerable groups such as people living with HIV, is enshrined in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966). More recent food and HIV-related government agreements include:

- Millennium Development Goals 1 and 6 that promise, in turn, to halve hunger and halt the spread of HIV by 2015.
- the 2006 UN General Assembly's Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS that resolves 'to integrate food and nutritional support with the goal that all people at all times will have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food...as part of a comprehensive response to HIV/AIDS'.

In September 2010 and again in 2011, governments will meet in New York to review the implementation of these respective promises. Ahead of these meetings, it is vital that governments are urged to:

- incorporate nutrition and food security issues into policies and programs aimed at scaling-up efforts to achieve universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, such as those to prevent vertical or 'mother-to-child' transmission of HIV.
- incorporate nutrition indicators into HIV monitoring and evaluation activities, including the monitoring and evaluation of national AIDS strategies.
- ensure that agricultural policies and programs are HIV-responsive.
- work across sectors, including with civil society and people living with HIV, to ensure that food and nutrition assistance reaches the most vulnerable, is relevant and appropriate and does not fuel stigma and discrimination.

Join us in calling upon governments to ensure that food insecurity is not a barrier to achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by:

- signing our letter/postcard to United Nations member states ahead of the 2010 MDG Summit available at the Multi-Faith Networking Zone in the IAC Global Village.
- providing the EAA with audio clips or case studies highlighting the links between HIV and Food to EAA staff and volunteers at the Multi-Faith Networking Zone in the IAC Global Village.
- increasing awareness among your networks, during the IAC and after it, of how proper food and nutrition can reduce vulnerability to HIV infection and increase resilience to AIDS.

Food and HIV: more information

Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance webpage on HIV and Food:
<http://www.e-alliance.ch/en/s/hivaids/hiv-and-food/>

Right to Food in the Context of HIV, FAO, 2009:
www.fao.org/hivaids

HIV/AIDS, Food and Nutrition, UNAIDS Policy Brief 2008:
http://data.unaids.org/pub/Manual/2008/jc1515a_policybrief_nutrition_en.pdf

Food Prices and the AIDS Response: How they are linked, and what can be done? IFPRI 2008: <http://programs.ifpri.org/renewal/pdf/foodpricesAIDSbrief.pdf>