



Call for integrated nutrition and livelihood support for people living with HIV

Dear Heads of State,

We are writing to urge you to ensure that international commitments to address both hunger and HIV are met.

The number of people living with HIV is now an estimated 33.4 million globally. Although the epidemic is stabilizing, this is at an extremely high level. People living with HIV are among the most vulnerable in developing countries, many living in extreme poverty, lacking appropriate nutrition and livelihood options. Rising global food prices are further increasing the vulnerability of impoverished people and communities, and further reducing their ability to cope with and recover from external shocks such as environmental changes and armed conflict.

In our global village, more than one billion people are denied their basic human right to adequate food. Good nutrition is required for all people, however, for people living with HIV, this is even more important. In the developing world in particular, diet can be poor and often malnutrition is already an issue. The presence of HIV can exacerbate this situation, reducing the capacity of people and communities to feed themselves. On the other hand, it is well established that access to adequate food and nutrition can substantially mitigate the impacts of HIV and AIDS. To date, however, limited progress has been made in integrating nutrition and food security interventions into HIV programs and policies. A key reason for this is the lack of political will.

Governments committed themselves in the Millennium Declaration to end hunger and poverty (Millennium Development Goal 1) and to combat HIV and AIDS (MDG 6). By 2015, hunger should be halved and the spread of HIV should be halted. Yet these goals are far from being reached, as is the UN target of 0.7% of gross national income for official development assistance.

The international community also recognized the importance of nutrition in HIV prevention and care when, in June 2006, the Declaration of Commitment by the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on HIV/AIDS, stated that: "all people, at all times, will have access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life, as part of a comprehensive response to HIV/AIDS" (Article 28). This commitment is an important component of governments' pledge to achieve universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010. But this target too is far from being reached.

In September 2010 and again in 2011, at the MDG Summit and the UNGASS review respectively, governments will meet in New York to review the implementation of these commitments. Ahead of these meetings, it is vital that each state demonstrates real political will to the integration of nutrition and HIV by:

- Delivering on Article 28 of the UNGASS Declaration of Commitment by incorporating 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, including those to prevent vertical or 'mother-to-child' transmission of HIV
- Incorporating nutrition indicators into HIV monitoring and evaluation activities, including the monitoring and evaluation of national AIDS strategies
- Ensuring that agricultural policies and programs are HIV-responsive and target smallholder - mainly women - farmers
- Working across sectors, including with people living with HIV and wider civil society, to ensure that food and nutrition assistance reaches the most vulnerable, is relevant and appropriate, and does not fuel stigma and discrimination

Thank you in advance for your life-saving action.

Yours in faith,

Add your name to this letter by emailing rfoley@e-alliance.ch

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