



Declaration on the Dual Epidemics of HIV&AIDS and Food Insecurity

HIV&AIDS continue to devastate families and communities throughout the world, and the pandemic is increasingly fueled by and contributes to factors associated with hunger. Food and nutrition security are integral to HIV&AIDS response, affecting the full continuum of prevention, care, treatment and mitigation efforts.

The roll-out of antiretroviral therapy in Africa—an unprecedented opportunity to save the lives of millions—is jeopardized by prevailing hunger and malnutrition experienced by those who most need treatment. While progress has been made in bridging the divide between the worlds of food and nutrition security and HIV&AIDS response, greater action is urgently needed to identify and remove the operational, financial, and policy barriers that stand in the way of delivering fully integrated programs.

Throughout Africa, communities, local organizations, governments, and HIV-positive people themselves, are developing innovative approaches to improving food and nutrition security for those affected by HIV&AIDS. However, these efforts often occur in isolation and without adequate support. Tremendous local know-how and resourcefulness exist which can be learned from, built-upon, linked to, and ultimately expanded for greater impact. The international community must invest now in identifying and enabling rapid scale-up of effective integrated programming, while ensuring that local initiative is not undermined and dependencies created.

The Africa Forum 2006, held 8-12 May in Lusaka Zambia, provided a first opportunity for 200 front-line field program implementers from 16 African nations, representing diverse sectors, and including leaders of HIV-positive people's organizations, to share practical experiences in integrating HIV&AIDS, food and nutrition security, and livelihood interventions. Forum participants worked collectively to identify and articulate priorities to achieve lasting positive change in HIV&AIDS and food and nutrition security. Through this Declaration, the Africa Forum 2006 participants present the following recommendations.

“When spiders unite, they can tie down a lion.”

We who have assembled in Lusaka, Zambia on 12 May 2006, declare that the following actions are urgent and necessary to ensure effective, sustainable solutions to the dual epidemics of food and nutrition insecurity and HIV&AIDS, for the achievement of the Millenium Development Goals by 2015, and for the realization of the human rights of present and future generations throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

CALL TO ACTION

1. Make the integration of HIV&AIDS and food and nutrition security a priority

Specifically:

- Revise and restructure funding mechanisms and institutional plans to enable integrated programming
- Increase funding available to deliver longer-term, scaled-up, integrated programs
- Strengthen and/or build strategic partnerships at all levels to maximize cross-sectoral collaboration in integrated programming
- Utilize the full range of short, medium and long term approaches to deliver comprehensive programs that respond to the needs of individuals and communities as they evolve over time
- Value and build upon locally available resources (human, financial, and natural), existing positive coping strategies, and other local assets
- Mobilize increased commercial sector participation in livelihood support, including access to microcredit, training, sustainable and environment-friendly farming inputs, extension services and market linkages

2. Increase learning and information-sharing in integrated HIV&AIDS and food and nutrition security

Specifically:

- Develop practical tools to monitor and evaluate integrated programs and support data collection and use at the community level

- Promote the documentation and sharing of existing positive coping strategies (including the use of indigenous foods), practical models of integration, and cost-effectiveness of integrated programming
- Empower community-to-community transfer of knowledge and skills across Africa
- Further research and disseminate information on optimal yet viable infant and young child feeding options
- Investigate and disseminate learning on the impact of stigma on integrated HIV&AIDS and food and nutrition security programming, and effective mitigation strategies

3. Ensure that decision-making about integrated HIV&AIDS and food and nutrition security are guided by the voices of those most affected: “Nothing About Us Without Us”

Specifically:

- Establish and/or strengthen platforms to meaningfully involve people living with HIV, and others most affected by HIV&AIDS and food and nutrition insecurity, in decision-making about program design, implementation, research, funding, and policy
- Establish and utilize mechanisms to ensure that the voices of front-line practitioners are heard on issues that directly affect their work

MESSAGES TO KEY AUDIENCES

COMMUNITIES: Recognize that you have the rights, abilities and resources to determine your own future. Challenge stigma—break the silence and make your voices heard. Actively demand services and information to make informed choices about HIV&AIDS and food and nutrition security.

NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS: Recognize the integration of HIV&AIDS and food and nutrition security as a national priority, and reflect this in national development plans, budgets and policies, ensuring interventions are community-driven and sustainable.

MULTILATERAL AGENCIES: FAO, UNAIDS, WFP and other UN agencies as appropriate, form an inter-agency working group to improve coordination, and develop and implement guidelines on how best to integrate HIV&AIDS and food and nutrition security strategies. Support governments in the development and implementation of integrated plans.

DONORS: Create and implement funding mechanisms that enable integrated, scaled-up and longer-term HIV&AIDS and food and nutrition security programming, ensuring that interventions are community-driven and sustainable.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS: Collaborate with each other to link and integrate programs at community level. Foster community dialogue and leadership on how best to integrate HIV&AIDS and food and nutrition security interventions. Document and share promising practices, tools and methods that support integrated programming.

RESEARCH/ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS: Partner with community organizations to carry out action and operations research, and build local capacity in monitoring and evaluation of integrated programs. Document and disseminate information on the cost-effectiveness of integrated programming. Research and disseminate findings on the impact of stigma/discrimination and the effectiveness of responses.



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