



Live the Promise: HIV and AIDS Campaign Press Release 6 October 2010

AIDS funding: failure to keep promises challenges all

Amidst signs of flat-lined or reduced funding for the HIV response, representatives of churches and Christian organizations engaged on HIV and AIDS expressed disappointment that governments have failed to provide adequate funding for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Members of the HIV and AIDS Strategy Group of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA) reaffirmed the need for all sectors, including faith-based organizations, to keep their promises in reaching universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.

Pledges for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, announced on Tuesday, 5 October, fell short of the lowest target set by the Fund as essential to continue current treatment rates. Governments and private donors committed USD11.7 billion over three years after the Global Fund set a minimum target of USD13 billion.

"What does this say about the state of the world's willingness to address HIV?" emphasized Karen Plater from the Presbyterian Church in Canada and vice-chair of the EAA's strategy group. "One week after governments at the MDG summit reaffirmed their commitment to eradicate disease and poverty by 2015, we witness how their promises are not backed up by the minimum resources that are needed."

According to UNAIDS, only one-third of the estimated 15 million people who need treatment are receiving it. Over half of those currently on treatment receive it through services funded by the Global Fund.

UNAIDS has noted that for the first time in 15 years, overall AIDS funding has not increased, even though HIV infection rates have continued to grow, with 33 million people currently estimated to be living with HIV. The Fund had hoped to raise \$20 billion to significantly reduce the growth of the epidemic, including the goal to eliminate the transmission of HIV from mother to child by 2015.

A June 2010 pilot study commissioned by the EAA on funding for AIDS services provided by faith-based organizations indicated clear trends in reduced funding, notably because donors' priorities are shifting away from HIV. These trends are particularly important because previous studies have indicated that faith-based organizations provide up to 70% of health care in rural and poorly resourced areas, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

There are serious fears that current progress in reducing HIV infections will be lost because funding is not meeting needs. The majority of faith-based organizations included in the pilot study indicated they could not add new patients to treatment regimes. Treatment is an essential element of a comprehensive response to HIV that reduces the risk of transmitting the virus.

EAA's "Live the Promise" campaign challenges all

"We have been calling on governments, multi-lateral organizations, civil society organizations and churches to all live up to the promises they have made to fully respond to HIV," stated Rev. Mike Schuenemeyer from the United Church of Christ (USA) and member of EAA's HIV and AIDS strategy group. "This failure to fully fund the Global Fund is just one more disappointment that clearly demonstrates that we have not understood how vital it is for all of us to put our full resources into eradicating this pandemic."

HIV and AIDS needs to be a core concern of the church, say strategy group members, not just because of the churches' role in providing health services but also because it is a justice issue that affects all those inside and outside the church.

"In our churches, we have people living with and affected by HIV", stated Rev. Christo Greyling, World Vision International and member of the EAA's strategy group. "It is reprehensible that we backtrack on our promises. HIV is preventable and these decisions on funding - after all the work and promises even on the Millennium Development Goals - increase the likelihood that even more people will die of a preventable disease."

Greyling continued, "This is injustice. And that makes it our responsibility. If we don't speak up about this, we are part of this injustice."

"This is a challenge to us as Christians," Schuenemeyer stated. "It is a challenge to increase our pressure on governments to fulfill their promises. But it is also a challenge to ourselves to step up our efforts where we can to fill the gap - with funds, with health services, with awareness and with hope."

For more information contact Sara Speicher, +44 7821 860 723 (mobile), sspeicher@e-alliance.ch

The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance is a broad international network of churches and Christian organizations cooperating in advocacy on food and HIV and AIDS. The Alliance is based in Geneva, Switzerland. For more information, see <http://www.e-alliance.ch/>

[Unsubscribe from EAA Press Release mailing list.](#)