

Facts and Figures:

- *3 million people died due to AIDS in 2005. Another 5 million people were infected with HIV, bringing the total number of people living with HIV to more than 40 million.*
- *The greatest demographic shock in Europe since the Black Death was the impact of the First World War and 1918 Influenza epidemic in France, which reduced life expectancy by 16 years. Today in Botswana, AIDS alone has reduced life expectancy by 31 years.*

Anyone Can Have AIDS.

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is an incurable but preventable disease. It is caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which is transmitted through sexual relations with an infected person, transfusions of infected blood, use of contaminated needles and syringes, and from infected mother to child through pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding. HIV damages the body's defence system by disabling certain white blood cells that fight infection. All people are at risk for HIV and AIDS, and all people can make a contribution to reducing that risk.

Not Everyone With AIDS Is Dying.

Although more than 25 million people have died since AIDS was first recognized in 1981, it is not necessarily a death sentence for those who live in the industrialized world. By and large, they have access to antiretroviral (ARV) drugs that prolong life, as well as clean water, proper nutrition, and functioning health care systems. People in the Global South do not have such access. In 2005, 1.5% of HIV-positive North Americans died due to AIDS. In Africa, nearly 10% did.

Solutions Are Within Reach.

Some poor countries with high infection rates have made significant progress. Senegal and Uganda seem to have contained the crisis, and may even be reversing it, in large part due to extensive education about prevention. Brazil and Thailand have improved access to medicines.

Wealthy nations such as Canada have made a series of promises about debt relief, increased foreign aid, and increased access to clean water at meetings of the Group of Eight (G8) and in agreements on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Keeping these promises and agreements would do a great deal to alleviate the social and economic conditions which worsen the plight of HIV-positive people in the Global South. Canada and other wealthy countries can also use trade agreements and legislation to give poor countries with high infection rates easier access to essential HIV and AIDS medicines.



KAIROS unites the Anglican Church of Canada, Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Canadian Religious Conference, Christian Reformed Church in North America (Canada Corporation), Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Mennonite Central Committee Canada, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and The United Church of Canada in faithful action for justice and peace.
www.kairoscanada.org or Toll Free at 1-877-403-8933

KAIROS works on HIV and AIDS in conjunction with the Christian Host Committee for the XVI International AIDS Conference, a project of the Canadian Council of Churches: www.ccc-cce.ca



KAIROS FACT SHEET
AIDS #1 April 2006

AIDS: A Matter of Faith

HIV And AIDS Are Matters Of Faith.

Anglican Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane of South Africa has called on the global church to “stop saying that we [Africans living with HIV and AIDS] are going to die” and instead to affirm Jesus’ mission of healing and solidarity in our own actions.

The Canadian churches have responded by acting out of compassion and for justice. This has included educational initiatives in Canada, fundraising campaigns to increase the capacity of partner organizations working in affected countries, and now, an advocacy campaign focused on the United Nations *Review of Progress on the Implementation of the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on Measures to Counteract AID*, the 2006 G8 Summit, and the XVI International AIDS Conference (IAC) which is being held in Toronto in August 2006.

This campaign focuses on rectifying the social and economic conditions that exacerbate the HIV and AIDS crisis, and on ensuring that all people have equitable access to essential medicines.

The churches are living with HIV/AIDS. God's children are dying of AIDS. As people of faith, we have done much, and yet there is much that we have avoided. We confess our silence. We confess that sometimes our words and deeds have been harmful and have denied the dignity of each person. We preach the good news "that all may have life," and yet we fear that we have contributed to death.

Plan of Action,
Global Consultation on the
Ecumenical Response to the
Challenge of HIV/AIDS in Africa

What Can Canada Do?

Demonstrate leadership at the UN, G8, and the IAC to:

- Cancel** 100% of the bilateral and multilateral debts owed by countries with high HIV rates.
- Untie** debt relief plans from International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank conditions that involve forced privatization of health care services, limits on hiring health care workers, and user fees for public services.
- Contribute** 5% of the funds needed by the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and create a timetable for increasing Canada's Official Development Assistance to 0.7% of our Gross National Income by 2015.
- Amend** Canada's pharmaceutical laws to remove disincentives for exporting less expensive medicines to countries unable to produce their own.
- Commit** to prioritizing women and children in all efforts to address HIV and AIDS, and to addressing the fundamental gender and age inequalities that fuel the pandemic.
- Ensure** adequate health care for all people with HIV in Canada, including immigrants and refugees.

What Can We Do?

- ⌘ Pray** that eyes may be opened and hearts moved to compassion and justice.
- ⌘ Learn.** Contact your denomination (or its development agency) and KAIROS for educational resources. Download a presentation, fact sheets, a bulletin insert and a Global Justice Report at www.kairoscanada.org or contact our office at 1-877-403-8933 for a copy of these resources on CD.
- ⌘ Act.** Three global meetings with AIDS on the agenda are taking place from May to August 2006. Let your voice be heard. Send a letter to Prime Minister Harper calling for policies of global justice to end the AIDS crisis. A sample letter can be found on the KAIROS website.