

In November 2001, at the "Global Consultation on Ecumenical Responses to the Challenges of HIV/AIDS in Africa" in Nairobi, Church leaders of Africa, international and African ecumenical organisations developed a co-ordinated "**Plan of Action**".

With this Plan of Action the churches committed themselves, among other things, to:

- condemn discrimination & stigma-tization of people living with HIV/AIDS;
- ensure that PLWHAs are supported and become involved in activities of the church as an essential resource;
- promote accurate information on HIV/AIDS, revise new curricula for theological institutions, develop participatory educational programs, empower women and girls, educate men to change their behaviour and take responsibility for containing the spread of HIV;
- develop curricula and training materials on HIV/AIDS at all levels within the church; equip a new generation of church leaders to engage the churches on issues related to HIV/AIDS;
- promote effective means of prevention and practices that save lives; promote voluntary testing and counseling;

-support existing care and counseling structures and build a movement of care that originates from communities;

-encourage congregations to make available buildings and property for the support, training and care for PLWHAs;

-support local congregations in caring for vulnerable groups, especially children, orphans, widow(er)s and caregivers; encourage and support networks of HIV positive clergy;

-advocate for access to health-care, ARVs, and prevention of mother to child transmission.

The Plan of Action includes the following Vision:

With this Plan of Action, the ecumenical family envisions a transformed and life-giving church, embodying and thus proclaiming the abundant life to which we are called, and capable of meeting the many challenges presented by the epidemic. For the churches, the most powerful contribution in combating HIV transmission is the eradication of stigma and discrimination: a key that will open the door for all those who dream of a viable and achievable way of living with HIV/AIDS and preventing the spread of the virus.

It also called for the setting up of an enabling support structure under the World Council of Churches, now known as :

Ecumenical HIV/AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAIA)

EHAIA describes the AIDS competent church through five main objectives:

- 1.The teaching and practice of churches indicate clearly that "stigma and discrimination against PLWHA is sin and against the will of God".
- 2.Churches and ecumenical partners have a full understanding of the severity of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa.
- 3.Churches in Africa reach out and respond to collaborative efforts in the field of HIV/AIDS.
- 4.Churches find their role in prevention of HIV/AIDS taking into consideration pastoral, cultural and gender issues.
- 5.Churches use their resources and structures to provide care, counseling and support for those affected.

EHAIA is present in Africa through four regional co-ordinators and a theology consultant. Their addresses can be found on the last page.

What can churches expect from EHAIA's Regional Coordinators?

- Advice on how to start or intensify own implementation of the Plan of Action through denominational or local policy papers;
- Special HIV/AIDS retreats for church leaders;
- Courses to include HIV into the curricula of clergy and lay-training institutions;
- Training of trainers for church group leaders (women, youth, men);
- Capacity building for planning of programmes and resource mobilisation to implement them;
- Exchange visits with churches for sharing of good practice;
- Resource persons for HIV/AIDS discussions in synods, assemblies, and gatherings;
- Printed and visual material for work with the congregations and communities.

If you have any such or similar requirements, please contact your Regional Co-ordinator or the Project Manager!

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... for an AIDS competent Church



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