

Oral intervention for the 53rd Commission on the Status of Women 2009

Priority theme: The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS

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Mr/Madam Chair,

This is a joint statement from the Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice, Salesian Missions representing the Salesians of Don Bosco, and VIDES International.

As faith based NGOs working with people who are infected and/or affected by HIV/AIDS on a daily basis we have witnessed the devastating impact of this disease on individuals, families and communities. We have also seen that when men and women, boys and girls share in assuming responsibilities for themselves and for mutual care-giving, societies are transformed.

Our commitment in the field of HIV/AIDS is multifaceted. We run health-care centers. We provide medical treatment, home-based care assistance, counseling, referral services and highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART). Additionally, we offer literacy programs, economic empowerment, skills training and assistance in establishing micro businesses.

We are committed to prevention education in formal and non-formal settings to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS. Our experience, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, has shown that education is essential to combating HIV/AIDS. Our prevention strategy is holistic challenging boys and girls, men and women to deeper self-knowledge, identity formation and healthy sexuality based on mutual respect. We adopt peer education and the formation of Peer Support Groups as concrete means of assisting the young in making healthy and informed choices.

In our centres for persons with HIV/AIDS, we assist girls and women who contracted the disease as a result of abusive relationships, whether with boyfriend or husband, rape or trafficking for sexual

exploitation. We also deal with men and boys educating them about the consequences of discrimination, sexual exploitation and violence against women and children.

We challenge men and women about irresponsible behavior in spreading HIV/AIDS.

From our experience with those infected and/or affected by HIV/AIDS and recognising the inter-generational transmission of the disease, we recommend that

- special priority be given to infected children who need antiretroviral therapy because they have undeveloped immune systems;
- concerted efforts be made to invest in HIV/AIDS education prevention, targeting especially girls and boys;
- family support systems be established that allow for sharing equal responsibilities in care-giving on the part of women and men, girls and boys;
- lifelong antiretroviral therapy be made available for all as was agreed upon in the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS;
- AIDS orphans ought to be cared for in all aspects of their development.