



People's Charter on HIV and AIDS

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PREAMBLE

Health is a social, economic and political issue and, above all, a fundamental human right. Inequality, poverty, exploitation, violence and injustice are at the root of ill-health. Achieving health for all means that powerful interests that work against people's wellbeing have to be challenged, corporate globalization has to be opposed and political and economic priorities have to be drastically changed.

HIV and AIDS is a development issue that calls for social and political action. It is also a public health issue that requires people-oriented health and medical interventions. Such responses require democracy, pro-people intersectoral policies, good governance, people's participation and effective communication. They should be rooted in internationally accepted human rights and humanitarian norms.

The special needs of women and children as infected persons, their dependents and care givers should be addressed.

In the current context, this Charter recognises the devastating impact of war and conflict on health systems and how it amplifies the vulnerabilities of people to HIV and AIDS.

This Charter draws upon perspectives of communities affected and infected with HIV and AIDS and those vulnerable to the infection. It encourages people to develop their own solutions and to hold accountable local authorities, national governments, international organisations and corporations to their promises and responsibilities.

VISION

As stated in the People's Charter for Health: "Equity, ecologically sustainable development, social justice and peace are at the heart of our vision of a better world – a world in which a healthy life for all is a reality; a world that respects, appreciates and

celebrates all life and diversity; a world that enables the flowering of people's talents and abilities to enrich one another; a world in which people's voices guide the decisions that shape our lives."

PERSPECTIVES

The AIDS pandemic is one of the greatest humanitarian crises of all times. It has caused death and misery, destroyed families and communities, derailed development and reversed health gains achieved over decades in one stroke. HIV and AIDS is already wiping out a generation in Africa. Two decades after it began its onslaught, the disease is still spreading fast, gaining a firm foothold in all parts of the world.

HIV and AIDS spreads along migration routes charted out by globalised trade. Social and economic distress due to conflict, war, disasters, skewed international trade and unjust economic policies make more and more people vulnerable to the infection.

The landmark Alma Ata Declaration of 1978 promised Health for All by 2000 through primary health care. Verticalisation, changing economic priorities, invasion of private interests into political decision-making and a lack of political will led to a total breakdown

of the public health and primary health care systems during the 1980s and 1990s. The spread of HIV and AIDS also contributed to the non-achievement of these goals.

Poverty, hunger and ill health are increasing because of neo-liberal economic policies. In this context, integrated, adequately-resourced health systems based on primary health care and public health are urgently required.

Lack of sensitisation and training of health personnel have created negative attitudes towards persons living with HIV and AIDS. Such attitudes and practices lead to stigma and discrimination that impede interventions.

It is essential to ensure that health care is safe and that people undergoing treatment at health care facilities are not exposed to HIV or other infections.

A CALL FOR ACTION

BY PEOPLE AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

- Mobilise and strengthen capacities of communities in health promotion, disease prevention and care.
- Empower women and youth as key players in HIV interventions.
- Build alliances among positive people's networks, women's movements, health and social activists, trade unions, student groups, academics and other progressive constituencies.
- Intensify the campaign for equitable and universal access to anti-retroviral (ARV) treatment through comprehensive primary health care.
- Facilitate legal measures and mass campaigns to change intellectual property rights regime that escalate drug prices.
- Oppose policies dictated by multilateral financial and trade institutions that disregard people's right to health and health care.
- Expose links between the spread of HIV and AIDS and the underlying societal determinants such as poverty, war and displacement, and participate in efforts to redress these injustices.

BY HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND HEALTH WORKERS

- Provide responsible care and quality treatment to persons living with HIV and AIDS.
- Stop stigma and discrimination in institutions of care and treatment.
- Respect patients' right to dignity and privacy.
- Follow ethical and regulatory principles in drug trials.
- Provide adequate preventive measures to avoid transmission of infection in health care institutions.
- Support People's Health Movement initiatives that address the larger social, political and economic issues.

BY GOVERNMENTS

- Develop and strengthen comprehensive approaches based on primary health care to include HIV and AIDS interventions.
- Enhance involvement of people and civil society in planning and implementation.
- Ensure greater involvement of persons living with HIV and AIDS at all levels.
- Ensure occupational safety of health workers.
- Increase access to basic services to people living with HIV and AIDS.
- Ensure easy, affordable and sustained availability of quality generic ARV and other essential drugs.
- Allocate adequate resources for public health.
- Implement guidelines for transparent, scientific and ethical clinical trials.
- Make nutritional inputs and psycho-social support part of HIV and AIDS care.
- Develop programmes for life skill education and women's health empowerment.
- Promote traditional systems of medicine with enough resources.
- Promote harm reduction policies and programmes for all vulnerable sections, including sex workers, drug users, sexual minorities and street children.

BY CORPORATES

- Place people above profits.
- Make available diagnostic and prognostic tests that are affordable.
- Ensure the availability of ARV and essential medicines at affordable rates.

BY WHO AND UNAIDS

- Evolve a comprehensive approach that strengthens primary health care and health systems, with built-in indicators of progress.
- Stop narrowly-focused vertical programmes.
- Urge all governments to follow the UN's International Guidelines on HIV infection and AIDS and Human Rights.
- Include non-priority countries in the 3x5 initiative.
- Take appropriate action in 'low prevalence countries'.
- Start immediate action for sub-Saharan African countries.

BY WORLD BANK, INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND AND WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

- Be accountable for social disasters caused by anti-poor macroeconomic policies.
- Cancel debts of all poor countries, especially those identified as vulnerable to HIV and AIDS.
- Stop free trade agreements, privatisation of essential services, and the commercialisation of health care.
- Finance HIV and AIDS interventions with grants instead of loans.
- Remove pharmaceutical patents that adversely affect availability of generic drugs.

We call upon all individuals and organisations to endorse and implement the People's Charter on HIV and AIDS and join the People's Health Movement.

PHM has an active presence in about 100 countries.

Largely based on the People's Charter for Health of the People's Health Movement and developed through an active participatory process involving people from various walks of life, including persons living with HIV and AIDS.

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