

Report on HIV and AIDS conscientisation meetings in FWCC, Africa section at Mabanga/Kenya from 12 to 16 May 2010

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Introduction

UNAIDS 2009 statistics shows that AIDS is the biggest killer in Africa. Globally new infections are 2.5 million, people living with HIV 33.2 million, AIDS deaths 2.1 million, prevalence is 0.8%. 25 million have died from AIDS, daily 7,400 new infections and a half of new infections are 15-24 old. Daily deaths due to AIDS 5,700, daily 1,150 children infected by HIV, 900 children die every day because of AIDS. By 2015 AIDS will be responsible of 10% of deaths globally. In Africa the report shows that in 2009, AIDS was on the first place and principal cause of deaths and take its self 14% of deaths in Africa. If no change is made AIDS in Africa by 2025, orphans 17-27 million, new infections 46-89, cumulative deaths 67-83 millions. 4 millions people is receiving ARVs, 43% of people who need ARVs are receiving them.

Why should the church be involved?

HIV and AIDS is more than prevalence rates, statistics and numbers but we are talking about people. Fathers, mothers, orphans, widows, the sick, the dying and the deceased. All those peoples represent the body of Christ. *The body of Christ it HIV+.*

What the Bible say about HIV and AIDS? Nothing. But the Bible says something about orphan, widow, and the sick. In Isaiah 1:17: Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the cause of widow. James 1.27: Religious that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress. Proverbs 31.8-9: Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights for all who are destitute, speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Religious leaders are in the unique position of being able to alter the course of the epidemic, because people listen to them and seventy percent of world's population identify themselves as members of faith community, which situates communities of faith in a privileged position to influence people's behavior and attitudes, even in relationship with the AIDS epidemic. Churches cannot conquer AIDS alone, but it will not happen without us, "If you do not address the issues of HIV and AIDS, your ministries is irrelevant in today's Africa" said Bishop Felton May.

FWCC 22nd Triennial August, 2007, Dublin, Ireland.

The HIV and AIDS working group at the FWCC Triennial August 11-19, 2007 expresses concern over the statistics reported on HIV and AIDS throughout the world, and particularly in the Africa section and demonstrated how AIDS compromise the way friends lives their lives in relation to truth and integrity, equality and community, simplicity, peace and how HIV and AIDS contributes to worsening conflict, poverty and environment degradation.

For Friends churches to lead in education and understanding for stigma and discrimination defeat, recommendations from the group were proposed to plenary assembly for adoption.

- FWCC recommend that Friends acknowledge that AIDS epidemic is a world calamity and can be a barrier to peace and development;
- FWCC recommend that Friends promote open discussion on issues related to sexuality, gender-based violence and intravenous drug;
- FWCC recommend that Friends promote greater involvement of people living with HIV in churches, response to the epidemic and adopt inclusive workplace policies for people living with HIV;
- The plenary assembly proposed the establishment of an advocacy committee to:
 - o Identify all activities started by Friends around the world;
 - o Establish a connection between the advocacy committee and FWCC;
 - o Sensitize all sections of FWCC to have a same message of hope in response to HIV and AIDS

The plenary assembly adopted the proposition of the group to serve on this committee with Fidel Nsengiyumva from Rwanda YM and Connie Archbald from Northern YM as co-clerks and Lin Mo from Norway YM as secretary.

FWCC Africa section conference held at Mabanga/Kenya from 12th-16 May 2010

Theme topic: “They will listen my voice and become one flock” Do you want to listen God voice? Please joint FWCC HIV and AIDS advocacy group.

Because of preparation of the coming FWCC world conference planned in 2012 at Nakuru/Kenya, all representatives of 4 sections were presents in the meeting. It was the great opportunity and served for us FWCC advocacy committee on HIV and AIDS as an advocacy space.

Our thanks have to be addressed to Nancy, FWCC General Secretary for her helpfully intervention aiming to request the implication of all sections in encouraging and motivating their respective yearly meetings to start working in HIV and AIDS. My self I suggested that, before we move for new projects, we have to begin thinking how we could mainstreaming HIV and AIDS in friends existing activities related to peace (AVP, mediation and global change etc).

My role in the triennial was focused on meeting people from around the world, explain them about FWCC resolution on HIV and AIDS and ask them to be part of the advocacy group. 3 helpfully meetings were done:

1. Meeting with Mrs Eden E.P.Grace from FUM,

Grace is a field officer from FUM and she is based in Kenya. They have significant activities in HIV area (medical support to PLWHA by providing ARVs) and were willing to collaborate with the FWCC group and the program in general.

2. Meeting with Mrs Marion Sullivan from Australia yearly meeting.

During our interventions aiming to attract attention of friends on HIV and AIDS issues, Marion was touched by the message and came to see me in the break time, she informed me that they have a group of people involved in HIV and AIDS programs, those peoples have experience that could be shared worldwide, in their country the program was very supportive and now the HIV rate is very low. She gave me their contacts for us to be in touch with them, but Marion promised to stay our contact person in Australia. Please Marion see how motivate Friends from Australia to join the FWCC advocacy group for experience sharing and projects support.

3. Meeting with clerks from different sections and some yearly meetings:

I met clerks from Europe and middle section, Asia and Pacific section and the new clerk of Africa section, all are willing to work with FWCC in HIV and AIDS program as well as possible. We planned to travel with Europe and middle section clerk in DRC and Rwanda, so that she could also give support in sensitization. I met also the representative from Cuba, Jamaica, South and central Africa, Uganda, Burundi and Kenya yearly meetings.

4. Meeting with Mr David Zalemka, AGLI international coordinator

AGLI is one of friend's big organizations working in African Great Lakes countries; it has many projects dealing with AVP, mediation, trauma healing and HIV in Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and DRC. In our regular communication, Connie the co-clerk in FWCC HIV and AIDS advocacy committee recommended me to meet David and see with him modality of working with his organization. In Africa section conference, I met him and it was not my first time because we planned many works together, but we still in planning. David told me that he needs to read the minute for FWCC HIV and AIDS working group report and after he will do that is possible in supporting the work. I send the minute attached for your use and consideration.

5. Marit Kromberg visit in Great lakes countries

Marit is the Clerk of Europe and Middle East, she is from Norway yearly meeting and her yearly meeting support peace projects in Rwanda, Northern Kivu, Southern Kivu and Burundi. We travel together in DRC, where we met all project managers and visited some of their projects. In our meeting, after hearing their reports, I was surprised that HIV and AIDS activities are missed and I asked them, if they found it normal. For them, HIV and AIDS are more important in DRC, where different wars caused displaced people and cases of rape, but for them, said all of them, they have not experience in the area of HIV and AIDS to help on the starting level. Marit who was also touched, expressed the will for looking on how she could get a fund for TOT training in HIV mainstreaming to people involved in peace projects including AVP, trauma, mediation and CAP in Rwanda, DRC and Burundi, after the training curriculums will be developed and all TOTs in peace will be trained as HIV and AIDS trainers for an effective HIV and AIDS mainstreaming.

Conclusion

Regarding in how friends are involved in many business and activities around the world, it still a great gap for them to understand their role to reduce the spread and impact of HIV and AIDS in the community. They have to know that HIV is one of the barriers of their efforts that they make to transform the human being life. If no thing is done, from here the rate will continue to grow and increase all form of human vulnerability as widows, orphans, deaths and poverty.

We need to discuss on what and how Friends want to address in area of HIV and AIDS and how they will collaborate in complementarily with other faith based organizations and churches. Its very important to have HIV and AIDS policies and continue to identify what is doing in Friends in HIV and AIDS area. Yes we know few activities started by Friends around the world, but we still know that as Friends, our prophetic voice is still needed. E.g. 43% only get ARVs from those in need. Where 57% percent people are? Sick, dying!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

We need your voice to come out and cry for those who can not speak for them self. Let us stand up as one to break the chain of HIV transmission by tacking stigma and discrimination, which are killing our relatives and religious leaders. Speak out to denounce fear, shame and denial related to HIV and AIDS. Let us help each other to achieve and live our Friends testimonies related to HIV and AIDS.

Your reaction is the first support.