

ASIAN PEOPLE'S CHARTER ON HIV/AIDS



Draft

Amplifying the voices of the people affected, infected, living with and suffering from HIV/AIDS.

The charter will be officially released to the international community during the International AIDS conference in Bangkok (11–16 July 2004).

About it...

The charter is a consensus/campaign document that amplifies the voices of the people affected, infected, living with and suffering from HIV/AIDS. It calls for immediate action.

Objective: To amplify people's voices and provide a people's perspective on HIV/AIDS and related issues like access, rights and trade issues.

Is it only for Asians? No, it is universal. However, in the context of the International AIDS conference that will be held in Asia (Bangkok, Thailand) in July 2004, naming it 'Asian' carries a strategic campaign and advocacy value.

Who is leading this? The process is initiated and facilitated by the Peoples Health Movement (PHM) (www.phmovement.org) – a mass movement with a presence in over 100 countries.

Several grassroots groups, mass movements, organisations of people living with HIV/AIDS, NGOs, INGOs (like ActionAid International), media and others are ensuring synergy.

How is it being developed? The Peoples Health Charter, the guiding spirit of PHM and the largest consensus document on health, is the model. (www.phmovement.org/pubs/index.html#Charter).

This Charter also derives the analysis from the Mumbai Declaration (www.phmovement.org/md/index.html).

Spread across the world, the consultative process is dynamic and interactive. The key highlight is consultations at the grassroots and with people infected, affected, living with and suffering from HIV/AIDS.

Starting from April 2004 onwards, the draft charter is being presented and discussed at various meetings, conferences, people's summits, workshops, etc. – at local, provincial, national, regional and international levels.

What we are doing at the international level:

- Meetings and discussions held all over the world to coincide with World Health Day (7 April) during the first week of April 2004 and continuing through until 31 May 2004
- XVIII World Conference on Health Promotion and Health Education in Australia during the last week of April 2004, along with several meetings in universities and other institutions
- The Public Health Association of South Africa & International Association of Health Policy Conference 2004 from 06 to 08 June in Durban, South Africa
- International Conference on Primary Health Care from 23–25 June in Iran
- World Health Assembly from 17–22 May 2004 in Geneva
- Call for Action – Meetings to promote and advocate for women's sexual and reproductive health and rights by WGNRR, Netherlands
- EQUINET Southern African Conference on Equity in Health, Durban, South Africa.

In addition to the above, the draft charter will be discussed, debated and fine-tuned through a dynamic and inclusive Internet-based discussion. Click www.phmovement.org/charter/pch-hiv.html. Responses will be collected till 31 May and the Charter will be ready for circulation and endorsement in June first week.

The official launch of the Charter will take place at the International AIDS conferences in July in Thailand. It will be submitted to the organisations of people living with HIV/AIDS, media, international community, governments, NGOs, academicians, INGOs, donors, bilateral and multilateral agencies, WHO, UNAIDS and other UN agencies.

Join the process! What can you do ?

One: ORGANISE discussions and consultations on the proposed charter in your community, family, schools, colleges and universities during conferences, workshops, e-groups, in organizations, clinics, Primary Health Care centers, hospitals, etc. Please forward this to others.

Two: JOIN us either as an individual or representing your organization/association/union.

Three: USE this draft charter as an issue for discussion during the week of World Health Day (April 7) in April until May.

Four: SEND names of persons and organizations to which we can send the final Charter for endorsement.

Five: MAIL your feedback with comments and suggestions to hiv@phmovement.org before 31 May 2004.

Six: PUBLICIZE the launch of the charter in July through the local media in your province/ country and through meetings. Send us a list of journalists and their contact details. Let us know whether you can help to distribute the press release in your region.



Introduction

HIV is recognized as a 'global development emergency' destabilizing societies and economies, thus *threatening millions of lives, especially in some of the world's most populous nations*. The AIDS pandemic is one of the greatest humanitarian crises of all times. It has caused death and misery, destroyed families and communities and ravaged entire populations. HIV/AIDS is already wiping out a generation in Africa. Two decades after it began its onslaught in Sub-Saharan Africa, the disease has been spreading fast. It has gained a firm foothold in other places like in parts of Asia, etc.

Africa's experience shows that HIV/AIDS, in a single stroke, can destroy development gains of several decades as well as the social composition of people. A similar tragedy is unfolding in other parts of the world. Spreading along migration routes related to globalization and to social and economic distress due to war, global trade and economic policies, HIV/AIDS is now associated with the resurgence of other communicable diseases of poverty, such as tuberculosis.

The Alma Ata Declaration of 1978 promised Health for All by 2000. HIV/AIDS was not a key issue in 1978. While HIV/AIDS has contributed in negatively affecting this goal, the total breakdown of the public health system and primary health care during the 1980s and 1990s has amplified the spread and impact.

Peoples Health Movement (PHM) considers HIV/AIDS as a public health issue. However, PHM believes that the way to combat HIV/AIDS is not through just a medical approach, but through better politics, care, research, pro-people policies, rights and governance and effective communication.

Access to ARV treatment has increased the life expectancy and quality of life of those who can afford it. The majority of AIDS patients being impoverished are denied access to treatment in violation of the principles of the international covenant on social, economic and cultural rights. Children orphaned by HIV/AIDS and women being more vulnerable, take a heavy toll.

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 and the deaths of poor and marginalized people. **Health for All** means that the powerful interests have to be challenged, globalization has to be opposed, and political and economic priorities have to be drastically changed.

HIV/AIDS is a public health issue that calls for medical, social and political responses.

This Charter builds on the perspectives of people who are affected, infected, suffering from and living with HIV/AIDS. It encourages people to develop their own solutions and hold accountable the local authorities, national governments, international organisations and corporations.

Vision

Equity, ecologically-sustainable development 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 each other; a world in which people's voices guide the decisions that shape our lives.

Resources are in abundance to achieve this vision.

The HIV/AIDS crisis – a public health issue

Poverty, hunger, ill health and its contributing factors are increasing. The process is amplified by neo-liberal economic policies, lack of respect for health and human rights and the breakdown of nation states because of conflicts, wars and disasters.

While endorsing concern about the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the need for Primary Health Care-oriented and Health Systems-strengthening approaches to other communicable and non-communicable diseases in an integrated way is urgently required.

Principles of this charter

This charter calls for:

Action by People's Health Movement and Civil Society:

- CONTINUE campaigns for the rights of people in poor countries to receive ARV treatment delivered through comprehensive PHC services
- FACILITATE Public Interest Litigations to oppose changes in Patent laws that are expected to escalate the ART prices
- MAKE links between the spread of HIV/AIDS and the underlying societal determinants such as poverty, war and displacement, and participate in efforts to redress these injustices.

Action by Governments:

- DEVELOP a comprehensive Primary Health Care-oriented and health systems'-strengthening approach to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic through interventions, including:
 - Peer education inclusive of sexual and reproductive health and rights information
 - Oppose stigma and promote respect and care for people living with HIV/AIDS
 - Increased access to basic services by people living with HIV/AIDS
 - Immediate availability of ARV drugs
 - Support those affected by the epidemic through empowerment
 - Allocate more resources for primary health care in general and communicable diseases in particular
 - Reduce the budget for factors like military expenditure that amplify public health and HIV/AIDS crisis
 - Place people above profits and politics and thus take control of policies that affect people's lives in general and people infected, affected, suffering (from) and living with HIV/AIDS
 - Develop a transparent, scientific and human way to conduct clinical trails through an informed consent approach.

Action by WHO:

- EVOLVE a comprehensive approach emphasizing Primary Health Care and health systems-strengthening approaches including preventive information and services and ARV treatment
- WORK towards reduction of high drug costs
- ENHANCE involvement of people, affected communities and civil society in its planning and initiatives through proactive dialogue
- NEED for:
 - a paradigm shift. WHO's 3x5 initiative [that promises 3 million persons with AIDS receiving Anti-retroviral (ARV) Treatment by 2005] requires contextual solutions. The 3x5 initiative at present focuses on treatment alone, ignoring the complexity of the epidemic
 - low cost drugs. High drug costs can lead to long-term dependency on donors
 - adequate involvement of persons living with and affected by HIV/AIDS and civil society in planning, implementation and evaluation
 - adequate budgetary and related commitments on improving health systems, particularly Primary Health Care to provide drugs and general health services and information in the long term
 - adequate attention to life skill education, women's health empowerment and utilization of traditional systems of medicine.

Action by UNAIDS:

- HIGHLIGHT the cost of inaction in 'so-called low prevalence countries'
- DEVELOP a specific global programme strategy to address the prevention and care needs of 'so-called low prevalence countries'
- ADDRESS its own shortcomings in using the in-country UN Theme groups effectively. Several in-country UN Theme groups have yet to sign a framework for collaboration with the national governments
- FACILITATE International and National NGOs evaluating and monitoring the efficacy of country-level supports of the UN Theme groups
- FACILITATE a regional and national score card of UN Theme groups
- CHAMPION the cause of non-priority countries of the 3x5 initiative.

