

HIV/AIDS & DISABILITY

Background

“There is a real need to understand the issue of HIV/AIDS in disabled people in global terms and to design and implement programmes and policy in a more coherent and comprehensive manner. The roughly 600 million individuals who live with a disability are among the poorest, least educated, and most marginalised of all the world's peoples. They are at serious risk of HIV/AIDS and attention needs to be focused on them.”

- Nora Ellen Groce, Ph.D Yale University, The Lancet, vol. 361, April 26, 2003, p. 1401-1402.

While there is little data to confirm that people with disabilities, particularly women, are more vulnerable to contracting HIV/AIDS, we know from the real experience of families and people who have a disability that the conditions of extreme poverty, poor health, and lack of education result in increased exposure and infection.

The prevalence of HIV/AIDS among people with disabilities is emerging as an important concern for Inclusion International members, their communities and countries. With over one fourth of our membership based in Africa, Inclusion International is enhancing its efforts to expose the relationship between HIV/AIDS and disability to ensure that:

- prevention initiatives reach people with disabilities and their families
- people with disabilities living with HIV/AIDS receive proper and informed care
- orphans with disabilities are placed in the care of a family member and not in an institution

Recently Inclusion International released the Inclusion International Millennium Development Goals (II MDGs), which acknowledges the need for international attention on the HIV/AIDS pandemic for people with disabilities and their families. The II MDGs state that, *“By 2015, the spread of HIV/AIDS in the community of people who have a disability will begin to be reversed and children with disabilities who have been orphaned will be supported and cared for in the community”*.

To contribute to the realization of this goal, Inclusion International is seeking to work with partners to: Raise awareness about the relationship between HIV/AIDS and disability; support organizations to design accessible materials to people with disabilities effected by the epidemic; and, to work with governments to ensure that policies and practices aimed at stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS include concerns affecting people with disabilities and their families.

BUILDING AN HIV/AIDS & DISABILITY POLICY GROUP: A PROPOSAL FOR COOPERATION & KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Inclusion International is interested in pulling together a policy group of disability advocates and HIV/AIDS activists, on the issue of HIV/AIDS and Disability in sub-Saharan Africa. The network would be formed to:

- 1) Develop gender-sensitive and adapted/accessible resources for community HIV/AIDS workers to use when educating people with disabilities about HIV/AIDS
- 2) Develop a grassroots research initiatives in communities to survey the number of people with disabilities and their families who are impacted by HIV/AIDS and identify the partners to carry out the survey
- 3) Develop resources/toolkits about HIV/AIDS & Disability for policy makers to highlight the international movement to stop the spread and discuss how to effectively include the concerns of people with disabilities and their families

A GLOBAL PICTURE OF DISABILITY, EXCLUSION AND POVERTY

- ⦿ The United Nations estimates that 600 million people worldwide have a disability of which 30% are believed to reside in an industrialized country and 70% are believed to live in a developing country¹
- ⦿ It is estimated that over 25% of households worldwide care for a member with a disability²
- ⦿ Recent World Bank estimates note that people with disabilities account for as many as *one in five* of the world's poorest people³, suggesting that of the World Bank's 1.3 billion poor, approximately 260 million may have a disability
- ⦿ Recent UNESCO studies suggest that only 1-2% of children with disabilities in developing countries receive an education. Boys with disabilities attend school more frequently than do girls with disabilities⁴
- ⦿ 40% - 70% of girls and 15% - 20% of boys with an intellectual disabilities will be sexually abused before the age of 18⁵
- ⦿ Families report that time to build social networks and support circles, friendships, get involved in their community are consumed with the need to just "get by" resulting in fewer mechanisms for support and limited social capital

For additional resources on HIV/AIDS see:

- ➔ HIV/AIDS and Disability Global Survey (globalsurvey.med.yale.edu/)
- ➔ Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (www.unaids.org)
- ➔ World Health Organization (www.who.int/health-topics/hiv.htm)
- ➔ World Bank Group, HIV/AIDS (www1.worldbank.org/hiv_aids/)
- ➔ International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (www.iavi.org)

For more information about Inclusion International's involvement in the fight against HIV/AIDS please contact:

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¹ E. Helander, *Prejudice and Dignity; an introduction to community based rehabilitation*, UNDP, 1992.

² World Bank, *Education Notes*, <http://www1.worldbank.org/education/pdf/EdNotesDisability.pdf>

³ Ann Elwan, *Poverty and Disability*; a background paper for the World Development Report, World Bank, October 1999

⁴ C. Lewis and S. Sygall (eds.), *Loud, Proud and Passionate; Including Women with Disabilities in International Development Programmes*, MIUSA 1997

⁵ Roeher Institute, 1992