



AFRIKAGRUPPERNA'S HIV POLICY

Revised and approved March 4th, 2012

This policy describes how Afrikagrupperna considers the problems relating to HIV and how Afrikagrupperna should work with the issue in southern Africa and in Sweden.

Background

Two thirds of all people living with HIV live in sub-Saharan Africa. Southern Africa is the region in the world most affected by HIV. The HIV pandemic does not only affect individuals, families and local communities, but has a profound effect on whole societies and their capacity to improve the living conditions of their populations. Some of the causes of the serious situation are poverty, sub-standard health systems and large income differences.

The HIV pandemic has become increasingly feminised, and in sub-Saharan Africa women are disproportionately affected in comparison with men, with especially significant differences between the sexes in HIV prevalence among young people. Lack of gender equality and lack of sexuality education are two of the most important factors behind the spread of HIV. Discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation and HIV status is widespread. At the same time, comparatively few resources are allocated to the work for women's rights, gender equality and sexuality education. In Southern Africa HIV is spreading primarily through heterosexual contacts. Among the cooperation countries within Afrikagrupperna, it is true to say that there is a generalised HIV epidemic, which means that it is common throughout the population.

Both poor and better-off people are affected by HIV. Nevertheless, poverty and inequalities increase vulnerability to HIV and exacerbates the consequences of the pandemic. Poverty deprives individuals of the means to cope with HIV and AIDS. The poor often lack the knowledge and awareness that would enable them to protect themselves from the virus, and, once infected, they are less able to gain access to care and treatment. Women and girls are especially vulnerable and with more control over economic assets, women can negotiate safer sex. They can also avoid exchanging sex for money, food or shelter to a greater extent.

Why HIV is an important issue for Afrikagrupperna

Afrikagrupperna works for a just world. In Southern Africa the possibilities of just and good living conditions are greatly impaired by the HIV pandemic. Poverty and HIV reinforce each other in a negative downward tendency, on both community and individual levels. This is why Afrikagrupperna needs to integrate the HIV issue into all aspects of development cooperation.

The spread of HIV is strongly related to lack of gender equality. The right to decide about your own body, and to decide if, with whom, when and how you have sex is fundamental to reduce HIV

infections. Afrikagrupperna needs to work, together with their cooperation partners, for equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights, to aim at reducing the effects of the HIV pandemic.

Large shares of the people living with HIV in Southern Africa do not get the care and treatment they need and have the right to. Additionally they are often stigmatized and discriminated as a result of their HIV status. Afrikagrupperna and their partner organisations therefore also need to work for increased access to care and treatment, as well as to counteract discrimination against those who live with HIV.

HIV is an issue affecting many different areas, and Afrikagrupperna works to show Swedish target groups the interrelatedness between these issues. Sweden demonstrates a well developed work in the areas of gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Afrikagrupperna consequently works to make the Swedish government highlight and push for these issues in all its international cooperation, including the EU.

How Afrikagrupperna works with HIV

The long term plan of Afrikagrupperna from 2012 to 2019 states that three of the tasks are:

- To make visible and influence the external factors, in particular trade and patent regulations that limit the chances of poor countries to manage the effects of the pandemic.
- To support partners and efforts in Africa oriented towards the societal and/or justice aspects of the pandemic, including states taking on responsibility for the pandemic.
- To show the link between sexuality, gender and HIV.

- **Cooperation with partner organisations**

The starting point of the HIV work of Afrikagrupperna is the cooperation with partners. Together with them, Afrikagrupperna analyses the situation, builds knowledge of and develops methods on working with HIV. The partner organisations are implementers of the activities. Through exchange of experiences in Afrikagrupperna's cooperation countries, in the region and with Sweden, Afrikagrupperna and partners get increased knowledge and can learn more of each others best practise.

- **Gender equality and SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights)**

Afrikagrupperna focus on gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights in the work against HIV. Together with our cooperation partners, in the prevention work and trainings on HIV, equality and sexuality, a participatory approach is used, starting from the individual and from local circumstances.

- **Integration**

To work with development issues in relation to people's rights is in itself important in order to limit the spread of HIV and also for mitigating the effects of the pandemic. In all programmes and all themes it is important to consider the possibility that there are women and men living with HIV within Afrikagrupperna, the partner organisations and their target groups.

- **GIPA – Greater Involvement of People Living with or Affected by HIV & AIDS**

GIPA is a strategy which implies that, effective and long term work to reduce HIV must be founded on involving people living with HIV in prevention, treatment, care work and support functions. For people living with HIV, involvement on different levels in the work against HIV might reduce the sense of shame, depression and stigma, as well as reduce the sense of isolation from the surrounding world. Engagement in issues which affect people themselves, in areas in which they are experts, might increase self esteem. People living with HIV have direct knowledge and experience of how the virus affects the body, well-being and lives. People living with HIV should be actors in the real sense, as planners, implementers and evaluators of the HIV work. However, this should not mean that people

living with HIV should feel obliged to inform others about their HIV status, this should be done on a voluntary basis.

- **LGBTI-approach**

HIV is spreading in Southern Africa primarily through sexual relations and is, consequently, strongly associated with sexuality. Afrikagrupperna wants to, in all work with HIV as well as other issues, avoid a hetero normative approach. Instead, Afrikagrupperna should consider that within Afrikagrupperna, the partner organisations and their target groups there are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersexual people.

- **Risk analysis**

Afrikagrupperna should, where relevant, analyse the importance of HIV for the cooperation activities and how these are affected by the existing pandemic. An analysis of how it is possible to reduce the HIV vulnerability within the cooperation should be included. Cooperation activities should not lead to increased HIV vulnerability for any group. Different factors act together in relation to vulnerability. Therefore, an intersectional approach should be adopted since sex, gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation as well as other factors affect the vulnerability. The relevance of the factors varies with different circumstances.

- **Increased knowledge about HIV**

Afrikagrupperna should continuously analyse the situation in Southern Africa and how global measures affect the conditions for reducing the spread of HIV. Thereby we can increase our knowledge of HIV from different perspectives, as well as how the pandemic manifests itself on national and local levels in our cooperation countries.

- **Information and advocacy**

The information work of Afrikagrupperna aims at showing the interrelatedness between different development issues, among which also HIV is included, using a rights based approach.

- **HIV in the work place**

Special guidelines for HIV in the work place exist. These guidelines specify the responsibility of Afrikagrupperna as an employer towards their employees living with HIV.

Responsibility for and follow-up of the policy

The Board of Afrikagrupperna decides on the policy. The policy will be reviewed annually by the board. The policy is founded in the long term plan, and gives guidelines for the programme work and activity plan. Whether or not the guidelines of the HIV policy have been followed will be analysed in connection to the evaluation of the activity plan.