



Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
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Press release

WFP BECOMES NINTH COSPONSOR OF UNAIDS

WFP committed US\$195 million to AIDS programmes in 2002

Geneva/Rome, 16 October 2003 – On World Food Day, when attention is drawn to the more than 800 million hungry people across the globe, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) announced that the World Food Programme (WFP) has joined UNAIDS as a Cosponsor. Together with the eight existing Cosponsors, WFP will strengthen the UN's response to the growing HIV/AIDS epidemic, which claimed over three million lives last year alone.

As the world's largest humanitarian agency, WFP focuses on fighting HIV/AIDS through its food aid programmes. As additional resources are found to make AIDS drugs more affordable, WFP is working to ensure that food is also available as good nutrition is an essential support to people living with HIV/AIDS. At the same time, WFP assists poor AIDS-affected households and individuals to meet their basic nutritional needs. WFP supports HIV/AIDS programmes in 38 countries worldwide, with operations in 21 countries hardest hit by the disease.

WFP's food aid helps prolong the lives of parents, enabling them to have a few more precious weeks, months or maybe even years to work and spend time with their families. "Perhaps we cannot give them hope for a cure, but we can give them time," said James T. Morris, WFP's Executive Director.

WFP's added value is its vast network and outreach to poor, often marginalized people in developing countries, some ravaged by conflict and HIV/AIDS. "WFP has a unique role to play, especially in emergencies, by providing urgently-needed food aid to vulnerable people, particularly women and children," said Dr Peter Piot, UNAIDS Executive Director. "Ensuring a stable supply of food in homes and the community is a form of HIV prevention as it minimizes the risk of people engaging in risky behaviour in exchange for food."

In sub-Saharan Africa, where the number of orphans due to AIDS has soared to 11 million, WFP has placed HIV/AIDS activities at the forefront of its existing food assistance programmes, such as school feeding. Linking up with UNICEF, UNFPA and national governments in 18 countries, WFP has integrated HIV/AIDS prevention into school feeding programmes. As a result, children are both fed and educated about the risks of HIV/AIDS. "The combination of food aid with AIDS education is an innovative way of protecting children from the dangers of HIV," said Dr Piot.

Through partnering with organisations already serving people affected by HIV/AIDS, WFP can also improve access to education for orphans and vulnerable children. One example is in central Mozambique, where WFP supports chronically-ill people

and their families through home-based care as well as providing food to day-care centres. By receiving informal education and vocational training, vulnerable children can gain the skills necessary to secure their future livelihoods.

One in three HIV-positive people worldwide is also infected with tuberculosis (TB) which is a leading cause of death for people with HIV. Food is not only an essential part of successful TB treatment, it is also a powerful incentive to patients to remain hospitalised until they are cured. WFP provides food to TB patients and take-home rations for their families in several countries including Cambodia, where close to 3% of the adult population is infected with HIV -- the highest prevalence in Asia.

Of the 42 million people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide, 95% of them live in developing countries and half of them are women. In 2002, five million adults and children worldwide were newly infected with HIV, 3.5 million of them in sub-Saharan Africa.

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