

- **Decreasing myths and misconceptions about HIV/AIDS and fighting ignorance**

There is a continued need to let people know the basic facts about HIV/AIDS transmission, non-transmission, prevention and care. Ignorance of the facts leads to fear, which, in turn, adds to stigma and discrimination. Recent surveys show that 50% of young people worldwide do not know how to protect themselves from HIV infection. General public information campaigns on how HIV is, and is not, transmitted and effective prevention methods are essential to decrease misconceptions.

- **Encouraging people infected with HIV to tell their story**

People living with, and affected by, HIV/AIDS bear the consequences and face the impact of stigma and discrimination continually throughout their lives. Such a sharing of experiences allows for community understanding of how HIV/AIDS impinges upon people's lives, humanizes the disease and allows people to reflect upon how they and their society are responding to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

- **Stigma and discrimination issues to be part of HIV/AIDS prevention and care programmes**

Every organization undertaking outreach work should discuss stigma, discrimination and any human rights violations that results from them. Peer and outreach educators should be given training on how to address the issue of stigma and discrimination in their daily work. The role of antiretroviral therapy in the 'normalization' of HIV/AIDS as it moves from a fatal disease to a chronic, manageable one needs to be highlighted. Fear, one of the building blocks of stigma, can be reduced when people see that having HIV or AIDS is not an automatic death sentence.

- **Documenting acts of stigma and discrimination**

The campaign should encourage documentation of stigma and discrimination. The websites of institutions working on HIV/AIDS should be encouraged to carry a page on stigma and discrimination, outlining the basic issue, programmes and projects, as well as successes and failures. These sites should also contain space for reporting on acts of discrimination.

- **Review and reform of laws, legislations and regulations**

Each country should be encouraged to undertake a review of its existing laws and regulations that reinforce or legitimize stigma and discrimination in light of international human rights laws. Countries should be encouraged to find ways of advancing the law reform agenda. The judicial system will be encouraged to play a role in promoting such reviews and enforcing changes through judgements. Also, grievance and redress systems should be put in place to ensure that stigma and discrimination do not occur in the workplace.

## Ten strategies to counter stigma and discrimination?

- **Promoting non-discriminatory laws**

The various international human rights treaties, conventions and covenants that countries have signed, as well as HIV/AIDS resolutions passed by the United Nations Human Rights Commission, should be translated into local languages and disseminated widely to create awareness within countries and to influence and inform the law reform process.

- **Health-care provision practices**

The health sector and its service institutions should be encouraged to review their policies, professional codes of conduct and practices to prevent and redress stigma and discrimination. Each institution should be encouraged to undertake a review of their practices and make appropriate changes. Training of health-care providers on dealing with stigma and discrimination should be undertaken. Procedures for taking action against those who discriminate should also be put in place. The monitoring of such policies, professional codes of conduct and practices should form part of country reports to the United Nations Human Rights Commission.

- **Workplace policies**

The workplace is another environment in which stigma and discrimination occur. The International Labour Organization (ILO) Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work provides guidance to different actors in the world of work and outlines options for them to choose from and to adapt those that are relevant to their needs. Employee orientation programmes should include issues of stigma and discrimination and people's rights with respect to HIV/AIDS. This will go some way towards removing that stigma.

- **Codes of conduct of professional bodies**

The campaign should reach out to professional bodies such as doctors' associations, nurses' associations, business coalitions, and chambers of commerce, encouraging them to adopt codes of conduct with respect to HIV/AIDS. These bodies will also be encouraged to discuss the issue of stigma and discrimination among their members and to develop a plan of action to address HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination from within their bodies.

- **Creating mechanisms to address and redress HIV/AIDS-related discrimination**

Each country will be encouraged to utilize, create or strengthen mechanisms whereby people who have been stigmatized and discriminated against can confidentially make their complaints and, where appropriate, receive redress. Existing mechanisms such as the office of the ombudsman, national human rights commissions or legal aid should be encouraged to address issues of HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination within their mandates.