



Inspired from B. Joinet

**AN ACTIVE ROLE
FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE
IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HIV/AIDS**

POLICY STATEMENT

JESUS TRAVELLED THROUGHOUT GALILEE ...
AND HE HEALED PEOPLE WHO HAD EVERY KIND
OF SICKNESS AND DISEASE. – MT 4 23

IN A SPIRIT OF HOPE, WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES,
LIKE ALL PEOPLE OF GOOD WILL ...
TRANSCEND THIS FEAR IN THREE WAYS:

- BY SHOWING COMPASSION TOWARD PEOPLE INFECTED BY THE VIRUS OR SUFFERING FROM AIDS;
- BY BEING CLEAR-SIGHTED IN ADDRESSING THE SITUATION;
- BY PROMOTING A SPIRIT OF SOLIDARITY AMONG CAREGIVERS.

*BEYOND FEAR: COMPASSION, CLEAR-SIGHTEDNESS,
SOLIDARITY – A PASTORAL MESSAGE ON AIDS, CCCB,
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INTRODUCTION

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is a complex phenomenon and an enormous challenge.

There are between 36 and 40 million people with HIV/AIDS in the world today. The pandemic is still growing rapidly. It is estimated that 100 million people will be infected by 2005. Some 15,000 new cases of infection occur each day. Ninety-five percent (95%) of the cases are in the South, in the poorest countries; with 70% of all cases, Sub-Saharan Africa is by far the most affected region. Yet 92.5% of all budgets for the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS are spent in the North. World-wide, 18.5 million (46%) of all people with HIV/AIDS are women between the ages of 15 and 49; 15 million (81%) live in Sub-Saharan Africa. The hardest-hit age group (men and women combined) is that of 15-to-45 year-olds. By attacking young women and men, HIV/AIDS is destroying the most active generation in these countries and leaving in its wake millions of orphans and elderly with no one to care for them.

HIV/AIDS is much more than a "disease" that causes tremendous suffering for the afflicted and their families. HIV/AIDS is a social disease: it is most prevalent in the poorest countries, and within these countries, it is spreading in the most destitute segments of the population; poverty is the predominant factor in the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic; once it has reached a certain level, HIV/AIDS has a destabilising effect on a country's demographics and socio-economic development and becomes in turn a cause of poverty, setting into motion a vicious circle of **poverty-HIV/AIDS-poverty**. The configuration of HIV/AIDS reproduces economic, social and political inequalities that are characteristic of the world we live in. It is, at once, both a mirror and one of the worst consequences of the crisis of bad development.

The violence of HIV/AIDS against people, the families and the communities it affects is three-fold: the violence of poverty, the violence of illness, and the violence of discrimination against the carriers of this "unspeakable" infection.

The time has come for DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE to "go an extra mile" (Mt 5 41) with people with HIV/AIDS. The time has come to get seriously involved in the struggle to break the HIV/AIDS cycle. Health is a fundamental human right, as well as an objective and a condition for the development of peoples. As the World Health Organisation (WHO) says, health is an overall condition – "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being ...".

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE'S contribution can make a difference.

How will we respond to this tragic situation?

1. RATIONALE

Poverty is one of the main factors in the spread of HIV/AIDS, which in turn has a destabilising effect on the development efforts of the peoples in the South. DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE cannot follow through on its commitment to fight to eradicate poverty without contributing to the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Thanks to its considerable resources, its broad network of communications and its ability to mobilise at the grassroots level, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE, can make a difference in the fight against HIV/AIDS. It can make a difference in the lives of thousands of people and hundreds of communities. Having these capabilities means that DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE also has a responsibility that it must not and does not seek to escape.

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE's commitment in the fight against HIV/AIDS is wholly consistent with the organisation's mission: "Development and Peace ... supports partners in the Third World in the pursuit of alternatives to unjust social, political and economic structures (and) educates the Canadian population about the causes of impoverishment of peoples and mobilises actions for change."

2. DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE'S UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE promotes **social justice**. In the Biblical tradition, justice is the first form of compassion and the most fundamental act of charity. The mission entrusted to DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE by the Church is to contribute to the achievement of social justice in the spirit of Vatican II.

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE draws from its faith a boundless ability to **unconditionally embrace** individuals and communities. Its method of learning through action is based on **ongoing support for communities and peoples** in their struggle for justice and development. Faith is also a great enabler of critical thinking about the structures and behaviours that cause poverty in general, and HIV/AIDS in particular.

In civil society, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE supports the efforts of the poorest and most excluded communities to organise and take charge of their future. The **preferential option for the poor** is not some vague sentimental impulse; it is a principle of analysis and a principle of action.

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE shares and draws inspiration from the **viewpoint of the communities in the South**.

The struggle against poverty, and the prevention of HIV/AIDS, requires a profound change of attitudes and behaviours, values and objectives, by individuals, communities, and peoples and by institutions and governments. DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE views the prevention of HIV/AIDS within the framework of a **life project** and a **societal project**, and not as a solution to a given problem.

These convictions are not add-ons to each other. They are so inseparably interconnected that they form a single perspective.

3 ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE AND GOALS

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE seeks to celebrate life, the most precious gift and manifestation of the love of the Creator, with the people and the communities most affected by HIV/AIDS.

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE seeks to help enable these people and these communities to gain more power and control over their lives and their environments so that they can enjoy better health and look after their own needs.

4. VALUES

4.1 **Individual dignity.** DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE sees people with HIV/AIDS as human persons and struggles with them for the recognition and the affirmation of their dignity and their well-being. Attitudes and practices that are judgmental and accusatory contribute to the stigmatisation, marginalisation and exclusion of people with HIV/AIDS. Because DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE recognises and affirms the dignity of individuals and communities, it seeks to defend and promote their rights and their rightful place in society. People with HIV/AIDS want to live as normal as possible a personal, family and social life and to contribute actively to the development of their countries. DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE sees people living with HIV/AIDS, including the children and orphans of HIV/AIDS, as the key players in the development, implementation and evaluation of programs to fight HIV/AIDS.

4.2 HIV/AIDS causes incredible personal suffering. In response DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE believes in a justice steeped in **compassion** and even **affection**. At the same time, justice prevents compassion from straying from the path of active **solidarity** into mere acts of assistance.

4.3 **Equity.** In a world of poverty and exclusion, justice cannot be reduced to a relation of mathematical equality. It does not consist of giving or offering the same thing to one and all, but in giving or offering to each according to his or her needs. This is one of the implications of our preferential option for the poor. Equity is also a value and a basic measurement in gender issues.

4.4 **Courage.** Personal courage and courage as an organisation are needed because people and groups who act in solidarity with people with HIV/AIDS are more often than not stigmatised and disapproved of in the same way.

4.5 **Truth.** Truth in face of HIV/AIDS requires the constant reaffirmation of the dignity, intelligence and freedom of every human person. It requires facing denial and manipulation with honesty. Truth requires that people be given comprehensive, scientific and accurate information about HIV/AIDS and about all the available means of preventing its spread. This is a matter of the person's ability to make informed choices. Truth is essential to the social and spiritual empowerment of individuals and communities.

4.6 Truth goes hand in hand with **openness, respect** and **tolerance** of differences. These are values that are fundamental to any honest dialogue. Development and Peace respects and follows the teaching of the Catholic Church. In its relationships with other organisations, with other cultures and faith traditions, it does not silence its own faith and

position. CCODP does not fund programs specifically designed to distribute condoms, nor does it fund elements of broader programs which involve condom distribution. In these latter cases CCODP will, however, continue to support the remaining components of broad programs, providing that they are consistent with CCODP's approach to development work.

Out of respect for its own integrity as a Catholic organisation, CCODP requires all of the projects it supports to present the Church's teaching on marital fidelity and abstinence as part of the full and objective information on all of the means of prevention to which all persons have a right, and to invite people to choose a means of prevention according to their conscience. Yet also, in light of *Dignitatis humanae* (especially point 3) of the Vatican Council II, it respects the diverse values and the different ways of understanding inherent in a pluralistic world.

4.7 Effectiveness. The commitment to solidarity with the forsaken is not an occupational past-time or a way to assuage one's own conscience in the face of the world's flagrant injustices; it is a commitment to transform societies around the planet. DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE identifies the changes it seeks to bring about with its partners and works tirelessly to achieve those goals.

4.8 Hope. "Hope... is the greatest and most difficult victory a man can win in his soul." (G. Bernanos, *Why Freedom?*). Clear-sightedness leads not to despair or inaction, but to the social project. HIV/AIDS can be beaten; communities can organise themselves and take charge of their lives.

5. STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES

In its work on HIV/AIDS, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE champions the **defence and promotion of human rights**. "Extreme poverty is perhaps the most generalised and the most paralysing form of human rights violations in the world. The renewed international commitment to fight extreme poverty must also take on a human rights dimension ... The first and most important contribution of a human rights approach to extreme poverty is that it keeps the focus on the dignity of every individual. We must make sure that such an approach ... becomes not only an ethical principle but also an operational principle" (Bishop D. Martin, *Address to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights*, April 10, 2002).

"No one frees another, and no one can become free on one's own; men [and women] free themselves together ... No one educates another, and no one can become educated on one's own; men [and women] educate each other together." (Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*). In its involvement in the struggle against HIV/AIDS, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE favours an **awareness-building approach** in which the organisation accompanies the groups it supports as they evolve their strategies, while engaging them in open and frank dialogue, and does not abandon them if they make choices that are not necessarily the ones we would have made. It is also from and with these groups that DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE learns the best ways to fight HIV/AIDS.

Knowing the mechanisms whereby HIV/AIDS is transmitted, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE recognises that **attitude and behaviour change** is the only way to stop the disease's spread and the most effective way of preventing infection in the first place. At the personal level,

awareness-raising leads to a renewal of people's life projects, and at the community level, to an alternative project for society.

Because HIV/AIDS is a social disease and the expression of a crisis of development, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE advocates a **holistic approach**. We do not support projects that are isolated from broader action to fight poverty; that are not part of existing networks. DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE's work on HIV/AIDS is not separate from the rest of its programming; it is part of the organisation's dynamic and its priorities and is informed by its experience. In addition to supporting HIV/AIDS-specific projects or carrying out HIV/AIDS-specific actions, specific information and action on HIV/AIDS form a cross-program dimension of our work, exactly as is the case with gender, development and the environment.

And because its mission explicitly supports the **efforts of women** to achieve social justice and economic justice, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE ascribes special importance to their point of view and their analysis.

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE is not venturing out alone in the struggle against HIV/AIDS; we draw upon the experience of our allies in the North and our partners in the South, especially the agencies and groups that share our religious affiliation, and with which we work **in alliance**.

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE believes in God's plan for humankind, and therefore understands the need for historic patience. It sees its immediate actions in a **long-term perspective**. DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE neither solicits nor supports initiatives to produce spectacular but superficial results in the short term. Profound and lasting changes in attitude and behaviours take time, patience and continuity.

While it sees Church networks as a natural and preferred channel for action, in accordance with its mandate DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE supports projects and programs in the South on a **non-confessional basis**.

6. POPULATIONS NEEDING PRIORITY SUPPORT

HIV/AIDS is particularly devastating for women, young people and children. Women and young people are already priorities in DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE's regular programming and should remain so for our initiatives on HIV/AIDS. DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE will find ways and means to incorporate assistance for HIV/AIDS orphans in its programming.

7. MAIN AREAS OF INTERVENTION

7.1 Financial support for groups in the South

7.1.1 Education programs on HIV/AIDS.

7.1.2 Lobbying and advocacy programs aimed at:

- creating and ensuring access to health care, particularly low-cost treatments, and social services;
- convincing governments to adopt laws to defend and promote the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS.

7.1.3 Programs to defend and promote human rights developed and led by people with HIV/AIDS.

7.1.4 Capacity-building programs for HIV/AIDS advocacy groups, or partners of DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE so that they can include a HIV/AIDS component in a manner that is compatible with their mission and programming.

7.2 In Canada

7.2.1 DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE's programming in Canada will include a cross-program dimension on HIV/AIDS.

7.2.2 DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE will lobby the Government of Canada:

- to increase its contribution to the UN Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria;
- to require CIDA to devote a significant budget to the struggle against HIV/AIDS;
- to call upon the WTO and other international institutions to adopt measures to help the countries of the South in their struggle against HIV/AIDS, and in particular to give them rapid and wide access to drugs and low-cost treatments.

7.2.3 Training for CCODP members, Church groups and other segments of the Canadian population.

7.2.4 Information to Canadians about how they can contribute to the struggle against HIV/AIDS by donating to DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE.

7.3 Internationally and globally

7.3.1 CCODP-led lobbying and advocacy directed at the WTO and other international institutions.

7.3.2 National, continental and global networking

7.4 As an organisation

7.4.1 DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE is member of HIV/AIDS networks.

7.4.2 DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE commits to promoting actions against HIV/AIDS in the networks it belongs to.

CONCLUSION

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE is becoming involved in the struggle against HIV/AIDS 25 years after the epidemic began to take its terrible toll. CCODP recognises that it is a worker "of the eleventh hour" (Matt. 20: 9). What added value does DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE have to contribute?

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE reaches the poorest of the poor in the countries where it is present in the South, through firmly rooted and credible local networks.

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE is able to support long-term development processes.

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE produces concrete, important and identifiable social impacts. DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE makes a difference in the places where it is present.

In Canada DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE is a broad movement of several thousand active members organised in information and action groups in all regions; it can and does make difference here at home.

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE is a solid institution, backed by a long and rich history supported by millions of donors.

Thanks to its faith and its humanism, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE has an exceptional capacity for personal and social mobilisation, as its awareness-building campaigns over the years have shown.

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