



Pan African Christian AIDS Network

## **PACANet 4<sup>th</sup> Pre-ICASA Conference Communiqué**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011**

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### ***Accelerating a Grassroots Church Movement for a Sustainable HIV and AIDS Response***

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#### **Preamble**

From 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011, in Desalegn Hotel, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the Pan African Christian AIDS Network (PACANet) convened a conference, ahead of the 16<sup>th</sup> International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA), to explore and debate, from a Christian perspective, the issues of ownership, scaling-up and sustainability of the Church's response to HIV and AIDS in Africa.

The event in Addis Ababa was hosted by PACANet, in collaboration with the Swedish International Development Agency, NORAD and the Danish Mission Council Development Department, and assisted locally by a team lead by the Swedish Philadelphia Church Mission and made up of representatives from the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the Evangelical Church Fellowship of Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Catholic Church.

The purpose of the conference was to review progress of the Church's response to HIV and AIDS in Africa, to renew its resolve to own and scale-up Church responses and to chart a road-map for a sustainable way forward.

In attendance were 151 participants (87 males and 64 females) from 30 countries (25 from within the continent). The participants represented leaders and practitioners from different church backgrounds, including the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, African Instituted Churches, the Evangelical movement and the mainline established churches.

PACANet is a continental networking body that seeks to link churches, Christian organizations and networks in Africa to enhance their HIV and AIDS responses by sharing ideas, skills, experiences and resources and to stimulate strategic partnerships. Given this mission, PACANet is dedicated to holding a Pre-ICASA Conference, every two years, ahead of the ICASA.

Participants of the 4<sup>th</sup> PACANet Pre-ICASA conference committed to the following statement.

## **Recommendations**

We call for:

### **1. The Shifting of Paradigms**

- A move from destructive and negative paradigms (i.e. punishment and stigmatization) to constructive and life promoting paradigms focusing on the promotion of human identity and human dignity.
- Appropriate and meaningful involvement in daily life issues at grassroots level within the local framework of the African cultural context.
- A deliberate and urgent effort to harmonize faith and science, belief and life.
- An emphasis on teaching about identity in Christ alongside the focus on preaching and the proclamation of the gospel.

### **2. The Quest for Competence**

- The church to adopt an inclusive model, where we “do the right thing” as well as being the “right church” at grassroots level. This should encompass inner competence (i.e. personal responses; local responsibility; recognition of the impact and risk factors; compassionate involvement; unmasking stigma, discrimination and denial associated with HIV & AIDS), outer competence (i.e. technical competence and strategic planning; appropriate theological knowledge; networking within an inclusive social approach; promotion of dignity and hope) and the bridge between inner and outer competence (i.e. leadership, knowledge and resources).

### **3. Sustainability**

- Discipline in thought, words and actions so as to realize sustainability relevant for development outcomes; benchmarks; long term motivation; sources and resources.

### **4. Fundraising and Resources**

- A shift from fundraising from abroad to fundraising within the capacity of the African setting; i.e. tapping the resources within local communities and believers.
- The linking of financial resources with the development of “human capital”: invest in human potential development.

### **5. The Reframing of the Notion of Human Sexuality**

- The Church to adopt a constructive educational model for the promotion of the understanding of human sexuality within the Church, which includes educational youth models on sex and sexuality from the Christian perspective, beyond the merely “no-sex-before-marriage” paradigm.
- An understanding of the Christian spiritual purpose and meaning of human sexuality; an integrative understanding of our being human, beyond the schism (dualism) between body and soul; the sacredness of intercourse; the sanctification of the human body and its sexual functioning.

### **6. Mainstreaming HIV and AIDS in church practice (The Quest for a Grassroots Kingdom of God Model)**

- Mainstreaming of HIV and AIDS with emphasis on service delivery to grassroots communities and on integrating HIV and AIDS related issues into programmes of church ministries.
- We call for a “Kingdom of God” centred model which would include:
  - A small group approach;

- Home care and ARV Treatment
- A community focused approach;
- The incorporation of local people and identification of community leaders.
- Special attention to be given to palliative care in order to improve the quality of life of those with life-limiting illnesses.

## **7. Advocacy and Christian Leadership**

- Training and leadership formation that focus on passion; compassion; excellence; the energizing of human potential and resources.
- The inclusion of religious leaders infected and affected by HIV and AIDS in local projects as agents of change.

## **8. The Reframing of Power**

- The reframing of power, whether male or female, as both are exposed to vulnerability and should be approached from the perspective of human dignity.
- The consideration of issues such as power abuse and the treatment of women; the position of males within feminist campaigns; the acknowledgement of the work done by women on grassroots level; the challenge how to incorporate males within “women care giving work”; loveless and inhumane stigmatization and discrimination within the realm of human sexuality.

## **9. Networking**

- The formation of new partnerships, including North–South, as well as South–South partnerships; interdenominational cooperation; interfaith interaction; inclusion of both the private and public sector.
- The overcoming of “denominationalism” (barriers due to doctrine, church polity, and confessional issues) and the joining of hands as together we can do more and better.

## **10. The Interplay between the Social Media and Culturality**

- The Church to explore avenues of incorporating the media within the notions of advocacy and the communication of appropriate knowledge regarding HIV & AIDS; the link between cultural traditions and the notion of human sexuality.
- An understanding of the interplay between culture, tradition and globalization.

## **Conclusion**

In light of the above, we, the participants of the 4<sup>th</sup> PACANet Pre-ICASA conference, commit to contribute to the current UNAIDS slogan and perspective: “*zero discrimination; zero new infections; zero HIV & AIDS related deaths*”, by adopting the following strategic resolve: “*zero incompetent churches at grassroots level*”.

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