

Brussels, 10 February 2005

Dear Ms Fransen,

HelpAge International would like to thank you for the one day consultation on the Programme for Action on AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria on January 21st 2005, and welcomes the opportunity to provide supplementary written comments. We would like to take this opportunity to summarize the concerns which we have raised during the consultation process.

We hope this information is useful and aids in the revision and drafting of the Programme.

Resourcing care

HelpAge International fully agrees with the Commission's commitment to strengthen health systems and support the training, retention and fair remuneration of skilled personnel to deal with the three poverty diseases in developing countries. However, ninety per cent of AIDS care is currently provided in the home, largely by older women, without adequate training, information or resources.

It is these individuals who need immediate relief and support in order to provide adequate care and cope with the impacts AIDS is having on them, their families and households. Such support needs to be specifically tailored to the needs of older people who make up 60-70 per cent of caregivers. The support needs to come in the form of:

- Training and information on HIV/AIDS care, TB and Malaria
- Access to essential health care, testing and counselling services
- Cash grants for impoverished households.

Support to orphans and vulnerable children and their caregivers

We welcome the European Commission's endorsement of the 'Framework for the care and protection of orphans and vulnerable children living in a world with HIV and AIDS' and the acknowledgement that orphans must be 'central to the response'.

Nine out of ten orphaned children live in the extended family, up to 60 per cent in older headed households. We ask that the European Commission follow the lead of EU member states such as the UK by ensuring that time-bound and resourced commitments are made to address the needs of orphans and vulnerable children and their caregivers. A response to orphans and vulnerable children needs to:

- target older carers of orphaned children with comprehensive treatment, care, support and prevention programmes
- provide direct support to older carers and orphaned children through cash transfers in the form of social pensions, child care grants and free primary education and health.

Counting older people in

Data on the impacts of the three poverty diseases is still fragmented and incomplete with little disaggregation by gender, age or geography. Those who are not properly counted forgo their rights to information, protection and treatment. The over 50 age group is currently not counted into national or international data sets on HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria. HIV prevalence rates focus only on the 15-49 year age group. This results in their exclusion from prevention and information campaigns, and treatment policies and programmes. Yet evidence from individual testing and counselling centres suggests that HIV infection does occur in this age group, that it affects older women more than older men and that it is on the increase.

An equitable and rights based approach to AIDS, TB and Malaria needs to

- ensure infection data is collected for the over 50 age group
- ensure access to information and training on HIV/AIDS for older people
- ensure the over 50s have equal access to testing, counselling and treatment

HelpAge International would also like to take this opportunity to remind the Commission of the following:

EP resolution on the review of Programme for Action (T5-0020/2004)

- Calls on the Commission to make reference in the revised Programme to the UNGASS article on older people as carers and educators for orphans and vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDS (article 68)
- Calls on the Commission and EU member states to ensure that policy and funding commitments to HIV/AIDS orphans and older people as their carers and educators be made within the financial framework after 2006.

JPA EU-ACP Resolution (ACP-EU 3398/02/fin)

- Calls on the Council of the European Union and the European Commission to ensure the impacts of HIV/AIDS on older people and their role as carers and educators is acknowledged and supported through the provision of health information, training and access to medicines.

We hope that the Commission can use the opportunity of the new Programme for Action to fulfil these requests.

Thank you for your time and attention,

Yours sincerely,

Adriana OPRESCU

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