



UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM
Standing Committee on Nutrition

Statement by the ACC/SCN at its 28th Session
6 April 2001, Nairobi, Kenya
NUTRITION AND HIV/AIDS

We, the ACC/SCN, recognize the devastating impact the HIV/AIDS epidemic is having on development, particularly in Africa. We further recognize that the epidemic is increasingly driven by factors that also create malnutrition – in particular, poverty, conflict and inequality.

HIV/AIDS and malnutrition often operate in tandem. Poor nutrition increases the risk and progression of disease. In turn, disease exacerbates malnutrition.

HIV/AIDS can be both a cause and a consequence of food insecurity. HIV/AIDS leads to reduced agricultural production, reduced income, increased medical expenses, thus causing reduced capacity to respond to the crisis. Food insecurity may lead to increased high-risk behaviors, for example, labour migration or engaging in transactional sex that increases the likelihood of infection.

Food and nutrition play an important role in prevention, care and mitigation activities in HIV/AIDS-impacted communities.

We, the ACC/SCN, recognize that:

1. the HIV/AIDS epidemic is not just a health issue but is reversing hard won development gains
2. a community-driven multi sectoral approach must be supported to address food and nutritional needs of all vulnerable populations
3. access to food is one of the main problems of HIV-impacted communities
4. nutrition and food security is a logical entry point for assisting affected communities
5. over time AIDS prolongs and deepens poverty, strips all assets and depletes human and social capital
6. HIV/AIDS attacks the most productive segments of the population, leaving behind children and the elderly
7. stigma undermines social capital and limits health-seeking behavior, including prevention of mother-to-child-transmission

8. women who are key actors in household food security and caregiving are particularly vulnerable to the effects of disease and its impacts
9. HIV/AIDS impacts agriculture through labor shortage, knowledge loss and a loss of formal and informal institutional support and capacity
10. breastfeeding remains of fundamental importance to child survival and development, whilst there is evidence of limited transmission of HIV through breastfeeding
11. nutrition is a core component of the essential HIV/AIDS care package promoted by UNAIDS

We, the ACC/SCN, commit ourselves to collaborate with the international community and Heads of State in particular in this effort by:

1. integrating food security and nutrition considerations into HIV/AIDS programming
2. concurrently addressing the HIV/AIDS crisis in our food and nutrition work, using existing nutrition networks and programs
3. identifying and implementing optimal approaches to food-assisted activities as part of larger care and mitigation programs, as well as food production and processing activities
4. taking steps to reduce stigma and protect humans rights of people affected by HIV/AIDS, including the right to food
5. elaborating and fully implementing nutrition care and counseling as part of the essential HIV/AIDS care package
6. operationalizing pragmatically the UNAIDS/UNICEF/WHO policy statement on *HIV and Infant Feeding* while protecting, promoting and supporting optimal infant feeding for child survival among all women.