

## Point Of View

# Health: Water, Sanitation/Hygiene and PLWHA

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## Definition/Background

To reduce morbidity and mortality among PLWHA, greater efforts are required to address the need to establish access to a minimum of safe water and basic sanitation while encouraging improvement of hygiene behaviour - especially for those who will not benefit from ART in the foreseeable future.

## Facts/Figures

HIV/AIDS is the largest health disaster in this decade, affecting the lives of millions of people worldwide, many of whom are already poor and vulnerable. Lack of access to safe water, basic sanitation and the opportunity to improve hygiene behaviour is a primary cause of illness and death among PLWHA, mostly as a result of their reduced immunity to common water & sanitation/hygiene related opportunistic infections (OI).

The only longer-term response to reduce mortality is provision of ART which is an increasing focus of the global community. However, the constraints to be faced until the majority of PLWHA gain access to ART will mean many people will face death and disease in the interim. It is estimated that PLWHA need a minimum of 1-2 litres of safe water for consumption, before and subsequent to beginning ART. The efficacy of ART and its potential dehydration effects requires that this minimum is realized.

A holistic response to the needs of PLWHA (be it food security, income generation, palliative care etc.) is being increasingly provided by a variety of players, and in the RC/RC context, primarily through Home Based Care projects. As this momentum builds, the HBC network will most likely become a key component in increasing access to ART.

## Policy Base

- The **Strategy 2010 document** identifies 'Health & Care in the Community' as one of the four core areas for the Federation.
- HIV/AIDS was identified as the top priority for the RC/RC Movement at the **13<sup>th</sup> General Assembly** with a declaration that member National Societies 'will confront this pandemic threefold, through prevention; care, treatment and support; and promotion of dignity for those affected'.
- The **Federation Water & Sanitation Policy** endorses access to water as a human right (UN Declaration), and underlines the need for appropriate short and longer

term solutions for the vulnerable, while establishing the important balance between WatSan 'hardware' and 'software', especially hygiene promotion.

### **What we are doing**

The Federation contributes to the MDG of 'reducing by half, those without sustainable water & sanitation' by actively implementing water & sanitation projects in over 35 countries worldwide.

The Federation intends to continue and further scale-up those activities to increase both quality and quantity of project delivery over the next ten years by launching a Global Water & Sanitation Initiative (GWSI) to better guide and support NS WatSan programming. Federation WatSan beneficiaries worldwide of 8.5 Million will at least be doubled by 2015.

The Federation targets the most vulnerable, and intends to create a special focus on water, sanitation/hygiene for those PLWHA, many of whom are among the worlds 1.2 billion people who lack access to basic WatSan facilities.

For many PLWHA, simple, home based technologies and approaches can be used to improve their access to a minimum of safe water, basic sanitation and improved hygiene at least until such time that ART is available to them. A pilot project is planned to commence during 2005 in 3 African countries to determine the appropriateness, in the RC/RC context, of embedding such activities in existing HBC projects.

To share and gather information on this approach, the Federation has recently joined the WHO Network for Household Level Water Treatment and Safe Storage.

The Federation is also a member of the Inter-Agency Group on WatSan in Emergencies which includes ICRC, UNICEF, WHO, UNHCR, Oxfam, MSF and others and advocates through this body and other international forums on behalf of PLWHA.

### **What we want to achieve**

The Federation will endeavor to increase the availability of ART to those PLWHA who are most vulnerable while continuing its efforts to prevent HIV/AIDS infection, promote dignity to those stigmatized, and provide care to those PLWHA and their families.

In addition to the above, the Federation will, through its network of HBC projects and other avenues, promote and implement increased access to safe water, sanitation/hygiene especially for those who will not access ART in the near future.

### **Key Messages**

Federation advocates for low-cost appropriate measures to be undertaken where possible, supported by the Secretariat (WatSan Unit, Health & Care Department) through the Regional Delegations, Sub- Delegations and Country Delegations.

Federation advocates on behalf of PLWHA with the International Community and other partners, existing or potential, private and public, on the need to better address their WatSan/Hygiene needs.

Federation provides guidance to NS's in determining the most appropriate approaches/technologies that may be used by monitoring and evaluating interventions and promoting best practice.

NS's active or planning HBC activities are sensitive to the opportunities for improving access to water, sanitation/hygiene promotion as a means to reduce morbidity and mortality among PLWHA.

#### **Advocacy Position/Point of View (POV)**

**International Federation 'Points of View' are basic statements of a Federation position on a particular humanitarian issue. These POV's are designed to assist Federation and NS leaders, volunteers and staff in advocating a clear and consistent position. Each POV is based on Federation policy or specific decision of governance.**