

## **ELCT HIV/AIDS Policy – July 2002**

# **EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN TANZANIA HIV AND AIDS POLICY**

### **Vision statement**

The vision of the ELCT is to proclaim holistic Ministry, which shares with the world the good news of the God's gifts of reconciliation to us, His creation, through Jesus Christ. The holistic Ministry calls the Church to be serving the suffering of the world and to bring the suffering world to accept the wholeness, which God has given to us.

### **Mission statement**

The mission of the ELCT in relation to HIV/AIDS is to enable all people to have life in its fullness. Guided by the word of God, the ELCT shall serve humanity: spiritually, physically and mentally and socially through teaching him or her word of God, providing each of them with health care and education. We the ELCT recognize the humanity and love of God in and among people with HIV/AIDS. Our mission is to minister to the people with HIV/AIDS with love and compassion.

### **Confession of sin**

We the ELCT confess before God and our fellow human beings that we have not loved our neighbor with HIV/AIDS as ourselves. We have throughout the course of epidemic fallen short of God's plan for us in relating to one another. Regarding the HIV/AIDS epidemic we have been biased, discriminatory, lacking in love, superior, and lacked the love and care that is deserved. We begin our policy statement with a statement of confession. We ask the forgiveness of God and of the community we serve.

### **Background of the AIDS epidemic in Tanzania**

HIV and AIDS are the very antithesis of the wholeness, which is God's desire for his creation through Jesus Christ.

HIV /AIDS has taken a catastrophic toll in society, decimating its population, tearing apart the social fabric of our society and threatening the economy. It deliberates the productive age group: teachers, administrators, public leaders, farmers and church employees among many others. It has caused deterioration in the quality of the life and life expectancy. It threatens to reverse the hard-won social and economic gains.

Since the first three cases of HIV/AIDS were reported in Kagera Region in 1983, the Ministry of Health estimates that 2 million people have been infected with HIV/AIDS. About 150,000 people die of AIDS every year and the number of orphans in the country has increased to about 800,000. This indicates that

about 8% of the entire adult populations are infected with HIV and many of these people will die within the next five years.

Through illness and death, the epidemic is lowering life expectancy, increasing the dependency ratio, reducing growth in GDP, reducing productivity, increasing poverty, raising infant and child mortality, and drastically increasing the number of orphans.

**The ELCT response to HIV/AIDS:**

The church launched the national AIDS control program in 1987 and involved all ELCT dioceses. The AIDS control program aimed at reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS and reducing its morbidity through holistic approach.

To-date, the AIDS epidemic has had a catastrophic impact in the society. This has led the ELCT to declare HIV/AIDS as a mission issue for care and support to affected and infected with the disease. The ELCT realized that with no cure in place, education on preventive methods was a top priority. For many years, the ELCT has tried to provide interventions to confront the evolving and complex challenges posed by AIDS epidemic. Despite these efforts of the ELCT AIDS Program, the scope and successes have been limited. A new commitment and more effective approach is urgently called for.

**Goals:**

1. To actively promote education and preventive activities to reduce the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Tanzania.
2. To provide medical services for those afflicted with HIV/AIDS.
3. To provide supportive care and counseling to those affected by HIV/AIDS.
4. To assist those affected by HIV/AIDS through home based care and hospice services.
5. To seek ways to support those left behind by deaths from HIV/AIDS and especially, to find ways to minister to the orphans who are left behind.
6. To spearhead initiatives, join regional and national transformations that promote gender relations, dignity of women in health development, and discourage socio-cultural practices or lifestyles that predispose women to HIV/AIDS.
7. To advocate the mobilization of resources for prevention of HIV/AIDS provision of care and treatment to people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.
8. To promote Networking with other stakeholders in addressing HIV/AIDS.
9. To seek ways that will bring Healing to the communities.

**Goal 1:** To actively promote education and preventive activities to reduce the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Tanzania.

**Objectives:**

- 1.1. We will seek out current and accurate information on HIV/AIDS and develop systems for ensuring that it is widely available throughout the church.
- 1.2. We will teach that stigma and discrimination are sinful and that people living with HIV/AIDS and affected by the disease are invited and welcomed in our churches.
- 1.3. We will fulfill our teaching role on sex and sexuality.
- 1.4. We will promote the revision or creation of new curricula for the theological institutes, seminaries, and confirmation classes.
- 1.5. We will develop educational programs on the way in which HIV is transmitted.
- 1.6. We will train the whole church in HIV/AIDS prevention including bishops, clergy, elders, lay leaders, youth, and chaplains.
- 1.7. We will promote effective means of prevention, practices that save lives and behavior that minimizes the risk of infection.
- 1.8. We will promote voluntary testing and counseling as they play an important part in HIV education.
- 1.9. We will encourage and support creative prevention programs.

**Goal 2:** To provide medical services for those afflicted with HIV/AIDS.

**Objectives:**

- 2.1. We will advocate for access to health care and to drugs to treat HIV/AIDS and the opportunistic infections of HIV/AIDS.
- 2.2. We will support the efforts of those who are campaigning for access to ant-retroviral drugs.
- 2.3. We will strengthen church related hospitals and clinics that are providing treatment and pharmaceuticals to people living with HIV/AIDS.
- 2.4. We will explore and promoted the contribution that traditional medicine and wisdom can offer as a therapeutic resource.

**Goal 3:** To provide supportive care and counseling to those affected by HIV/AIDS.

**Objectives:**

- 3.1. We will train and equip Pastors Evangelists, Parish Workers, and infected/affected persons to be counselors.
- 3.2. We shall provide spiritual/pastoral counseling.
- 3.3. We shall promote economic empowerment to the affected families.
- 3.4. We will train the families on care and coping mechanisms.
- 3.5. We shall collaborate and communicate with other stakeholders for referrals.

**Goal 4:** To assist those affected by HIV/AIDS through home based care and hospice services.

**Objectives:**

- 4.1. We will identify and reach to the PLWHA and families.
- 4.2. We shall provide orphans with shelter, fees, cloth and medical care.
- 4.3. We will offer emotional and spiritual support and continuing counseling

**Goal 5:** To seek ways to support those left behind by deaths from HIV/AIDS and especially, to find ways to minister to the orphans who are left behind.

**Objectives:**

- 5.1. Setting up an appropriate system of identifying orphans for social support, medical care and education.
- 5.2. We shall sensitize our church members and the communities to increase efforts on fund raising to support orphans, widows and widowers.

**Goal 6: Gender and Culture**

To spearhead initiatives, join regional and national transformations that promote, gender relations, dignity of women in health development and discourage socio-cultural practices or lifestyles that predispose women to HIV/AIDS.

**Objectives:**

- 6.1 To identify specific high-risk group for HIV/AIDS transmission and launch interventions for reducing the risk.
- 6.2 Identify local cultural practices that increase risk of HIV transmission in men and women and address them.
- 6.3 To adopt roles of a pressure group that influence gender balance in the communities where ELCT operates.
- 6.4 To collaborate with other actors in health towards fueling endeavors of reducing HIV/AIDS transmission in the area of ministry.

**Goal 7: Advocacy:**

To advocate the mobilization of resources for prevention of HIV/AIDS provision of care and treatment to people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

**Objectives:**

- 7.1. Develop policies at all levels of church governance that respect the right, promote the dignity and ensure care and support for people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.
- 7.2. Be present at actively participate in and coordinate ecumenically with key regional and international events and conferences and government meetings on HIV/AIDS.
- 7.3. Promote understanding and advocacy for the rights of all who are affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.
- 7.4. To alert the government on the reinforcement of curriculum for family life education in Primary and Secondary Schools.

- 7.5. To advocate national and international for pharmaceutical interventions for people living with HIV/AIDS.
- 7.6. To advocate for appropriate orphans support.

### **Goal 8: Networking**

To network with other actors working on HIV/AIDS prevention and control in and outside the country.

#### **Objectives:**

- 8.1. We shall establish a networking system among NGO's, religious organizations, the Government, local and international organizations.
- 8.2. We will share the information and experience on HIV/AIDS prevention with other stakeholders.
- 8.3. We will complement government efforts in the control of HIV/AIDS in the spirit of partnership and contribute towards the review of and articulation of relevant policies.
- 8.4. We shall collaborate and communicate with other actors for referrals.

### **Goal 9: Healing**

To support internal healing for the afflicted, destitute, and orphans.

#### **Objectives:**

- 1.1. We shall create a conducive atmosphere through counseling for those affected/infected by HIV/AIDS to acknowledge the healing of their conscious or attitudes.
- 1.2. We will teach that stigma and discrimination are sinful. The Church must be open and extend welcome for people affected/infected by HIV/AIDS.
- 1.3. We will ensure that the Church is preaching the Theology of love without discrimination, Judgment and condemnation.
- 1.4. The Church must create a conducive environment whereby "Theology of the Well" can take place through training, developing health learning materials and establish of circus prayers.

#### **We the ELCT commit our Church and ourselves to:**

- ❖ Become Healing Communities through prayer and action.
- ❖ Relying upon the Spirit of courage and commit ourselves to learning and education in the issues of HIV/AIDS.
- ❖ Provide care and counseling to those infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS.
- ❖ Work tirelessly to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.
- ❖ Further develop our theological understanding of the challenge of HIV/AIDS.
- ❖ Advocacy work on behalf of the community in regards to HIV/AIDS.
- ❖ Become prophetic voices of calling believers to a new vision of sexuality, HIV/AIDS and our commonality as children of God.