

Open letter to the Secretary General

16 June 2009

Re: Report on Progress made in the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS

To Secretary General Ban Ki-moon:

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing in dismay at the almost complete omission of HIV care and support or the important role that home-based caregivers play in delivering these HIV services in the Report on Progress made in the Implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS. Despite the fact that care and support are two of the four pillars of universal access and, in our view, central to achieving the others, there is not a single mention of volunteer (home-based) caregivers in the report. We urge you to recognize the important role that home-based caregivers play in responding to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The AIDS pandemic has changed the fabric of communities around the world and created a particular burden in the lives of many people, especially girls and women of all ages. With health systems failing and people living with HIV longer thanks to access to ARVs, poor women are increasingly forced to devote their time, energy, skills and the little resources they have to care for their family members at home and provide their services to the wider community, often at great expense to themselves. This invisible task-shifting must be recognized, valued and validated as work, and AIDS funding and programming must build on the contributions and help to alleviate the burdens that home-based caregivers are making and work toward health system strengthening.

Although millions of dollars have been invested in responding to HIV and AIDS many times little, if any, of these funds reach people caring for their family members or caregivers working in communities.

While we admire your strong call to strengthen the global political commitment and scaling up funding to urgently achieve universal access, we urge you to acknowledge that in order for the tide of HIV and AIDS to turn, a major shift in the way that AIDS funding and programs are planned, designed and implemented must take place. Specifically, AIDS funding and programming needs to integrate and build upon what communities, and community home-based caregivers in particular, are already providing for their communities. National governments and global donors should be held accountable to the needs and priorities of communities by members of those communities. Home-based caregivers, particularly those organized in groups, are already placed to lead such a transformative process, which begins by recognizing and validating their contributions, commitment and capacity.

It is our fear that the HIV and AIDS pandemic will continue to grow without a serious transformation in the manner in which AIDS and health systems strengthening money and programs are designed and allocated. We therefore urge the United Nations, UNAIDS and their implementing agencies to adopt a policy and program design that reflects these realities.

Specifically, we urge the following actions:

- 1) Recognize, affirm and support community caregivers by including them as decision-makers in design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of resources and programmes.
- 2) Increase the quality and accessibility of funding for caregiving, with a minimum percentage of direct funding support earmarked for community-led responses to AIDS, particularly those driven by women.
- 3) Strengthen and expand public health care services and human resources for health by increasing international and national funding, in a continuum of care that supports women and girls providing care services in their households and communities in the context of HIV/AIDS.
- 4) Protect and promote women's land and inheritance rights.
- 5) Reduce household poverty and the cost of care through government provision of basic services and social protection measures, and the capacity of community-based organizations is built to develop livelihoods initiatives for care providers.

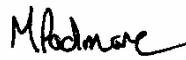
Yours sincerely,



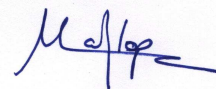
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The Caregivers Action Alliance



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