

## **THE CHALLENGE OF PROMOTING PEACE AS A NEW OPPORTUNITY TO STOP AIDS**

Peace is not just the absence of war but the absence of every kind of violence. Violence against Women, in many cases, is at the same time a cause and a consequence of HIV/AIDS.

Gender inequities, discriminatory access to health services, and sexual violence increase the vulnerability of women to HIV, especially young women.

Women, especially from poorer sectors, face boundaries in accessing prevention, treatment, and support services due to their limited decision-making power, their lack of control of financial resources, limited mobilization, and the responsibility of taking care of their children. Women and girls usually have less information on HIV and fewer resources to take preventive measures.

In many cases, the vulnerable situation of women living with HIV is aggravated by stigma and discrimination which impede women to be able to exercise their rights and have a dignifying life.

When women living with HIV have peace in their homes, there are greater possibilities that their sexual and reproductive health is not diminished and that they can enjoy a healthy and respected life. At the same time, women living with HIV can make joint decisions for pregnancy and reproduction. Women living with HIV can live without experiencing violence from those people who are supposed to support them. Women living with HIV are not afraid to communicate their diagnosis to their families and could look for the treatment and care that they need.

To have Peace in their communities means to live without stigma and discrimination, to walk fearless, to meet their friends and neighbors, and benefit from local services. They should not have to worry because people point the finger at women living with HIV or avoid their children and homes.

When Peace reigns in the countries of the world, resources could be addressed to true needs: the health and education sectors. Women are not expelled from their homes nor support networks. Women don't have to face the possibility of being used as arms.

Once the international community recognizes the importance of Peace at all levels and its role in eliminating conflict, poverty, and inequalities, we could witness broad meaningful global changes towards the HIV epidemic. We would not only watch decrease the number of people who ought to challenge situations that prevent them from protecting themselves from the HIV infection but also, people living with HIV would stop feeling that they have to hide themselves.

The "More Peace, Less AIDS" Foundation is a permanent contribution, through its global campaign, to building a culture of PEACE that opposes the violence produced by ignorance, prejudice, fanatics, and inequality, taking advantage of this opportunity to stop AIDS.