

## HIV/AIDS

*“HIV/AIDS has adverse effects on all sectors of society. It is, in fact, the breadth and scope of these effects that make AIDS a threat to Human Security and a potentially destabilising force worldwide.” - Peter Piot, UNAIDS*

One of the most tangible threats to a person's security, is the threat to their lives. The HIV/AIDS epidemic has to date claimed the lives of over 25 million people and every ten seconds another person dies as a result of the virus. Malaria, TB and other infectious diseases cause similar devastation.

Freedom from fear and freedom from want are elemental to Human Security. These freedoms have been eroded for the 70 million people infected since the emergence of HIV, and the countless millions affected by HIV globally. Apart from the immense individual suffering it brings with it, HIV/AIDS has an unparalleled capacity to reverse development gains and destabilise societies. Thus the epidemic threatens Human Security both directly and indirectly.

HIV/AIDS is much more than a public health emergency – it is the single biggest threat to development, and demands a mainstreaming response at policy, personnel and programme levels.

Dóchas welcomes the Irish government's prioritisation of HIV/AIDS during its EU Presidency. Ireland can play a strategic role through the Presidency and beyond to ensure a more effective, proactive and holistic EU response to HIV/AIDS. The hosting by Ireland of a major conference on HIV/AIDS will provide the opportunity to garner support among member states for practical measures to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS.

### ***Dóchas asks that Ireland, as President of the European Council:***

- *Ensure the provision of additional resources. The EU and its member states should make long-term commitments to the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, in line with the 'Equitable Contributions Framework.'*

Current estimates of the cost to address all three diseases covered by the Fund come close to \$14.2bn for 2004. However resources thus far pledged are insufficient to meet the projected needs in 2004 and beyond which has hampered efforts to provide for long term planning and investment in the global HIV/AIDS response.<sup>1</sup> In contrast during 2002 the world spent \$800 billion on defence compared with about \$56 billion in development.

- *Provide leadership. The EU and its member states should reaffirm and strengthen their commitments to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. (PoA of ICPD, Cairo, 1994)*

The Programme of Action was adopted by 179 countries, including Ireland. 2004 marks its tenth anniversary. The Programme recognised that the fight against HIV/AIDS is an integral component of sexual and reproductive health and rights programmes. It sets out a list of actions with the aims of preventing, reducing the spread of and minimising the impact of HIV/AIDS. It insists that HIV infected individuals should have adequate medical care and are not discriminated against. Implementing the Programme is essential to meeting the Millennium Development Goals and strong leadership must be shown in this regard.

- *Ensure access to medicines. Ireland should actively seek the introduction of EU-wide legislation obliging all member states to enact the August 30<sup>th</sup> WTO decision.*

Some six million people in developing countries have HIV infections that require anti-retroviral treatment however less than 300,000 are being treated, 50,000 of whom are in Africa. A decision reached by WTO members on the 30<sup>th</sup> August 2003 allows for the production and export of generic medicines to countries with insufficient pharmaceuticals manufacturing capacity. It is vital that the agreement is made operational without fear of sanctions and furthermore that weak health service systems are supported to enable the proper delivery of such treatments.

<sup>1</sup> Dóchas also advocates that the human development approach to debt sustainability and to the burden of HIV/AIDS in a country is taken into account in decisions around debt relief/ cancellation.