

Statement from the African Coalition of Communities Responsive to Climate Change on World AIDS Day 2024

December 1, 2024: Today, as we commemorate World AIDS Day, the African Coalition of Communities Responsive to Climate Change (ACCRCC) joins the global community in reaffirming our commitment to the fight against HIV/AIDS. This year's theme, "Reaching the Unreached: Building Bridges of Equity in HIV Response", resonates deeply with our mission to promote resilience and justice for marginalized communities disproportionately affected by both the climate crisis and health inequities.

The Interlinkage Between Climate Change and HIV/AIDS

The HIV/AIDS epidemic remains a public health and development challenge in Africa. Over four decades, significant progress has been made in reducing infections, increasing access to treatment, and improving awareness. However, climate change is emerging as a critical barrier to these gains, exacerbating vulnerabilities and compounding existing inequalities.

Climate shocks, including droughts, floods, and extreme weather events, are disrupting livelihoods, displacing communities, and intensifying poverty. In such conditions, access to healthcare, including HIV prevention, treatment, and support services, is often compromised.

Vulnerable populations, including women, young girls, and key populations, bear the brunt of these crises. Their exposure to risk factors such as gender-based violence, food insecurity, and reduced access to health facilities increases their vulnerability to HIV.

Prioritizing Resilience and Equity

ACCRCC calls for a multi-sectoral approach that places resilience and equity at the heart of the HIV/AIDS and climate response. Addressing the intersecting crises of health and climate change requires Governments and stakeholders to invest in climate-resilient health systems capable of delivering uninterrupted HIV services, even during environmental crises. This includes robust infrastructure, community health networks, and mobile clinics for displaced populations.

Further, communities are at the forefront of both HIV and climate challenges. By investing in community-led initiatives, we can ensure that solutions are locally appropriate and sustainable. Women, youth, and indigenous groups must be supported to lead in both advocacy and service delivery.

To help realise what needs to be done, partnerships between health, environmental, and development actors are essential to address the dual challenges of climate change and HIV. Multi-stakeholder coalitions can bridge the gap between climate justice and health equity, ensuring no one is left behind.

However, it must be realised that the marginalized populations must remain central in the HIV response. Policies and programs must address systemic inequalities that increase their susceptibility to HIV and climate-related impacts.

As we look to the future, ACCRCC emphasizes the role of innovation and advocacy in achieving sustainable outcomes. Digital technologies, climate-smart agriculture, and renewable energy solutions can improve living conditions for communities affected by both climate change and HIV/AIDS. Additionally, advocacy for increased funding and policy coherence is critical to drive change.

A Call to Action

On this World AIDS Day, ACCRCC calls on governments, civil society, donors, and international organizations to:

- Scale up investments in integrated health and climate adaptation programs.
- Champion policies that advance gender equity, human rights, and community resilience.
- Foster inclusive dialogues that bring voices from the frontlines of climate and HIV struggles to decision-making tables.

Our collective action is essential to address the intersecting challenges of climate change and HIV/AIDS. Together, we can forge pathways to resilience and equity for the most vulnerable among us.

Solidarity and Hope

While the challenges are great, so too is the potential for change. ACCRCC stands in solidarity with the millions of individuals living with HIV, the healthcare workers on the frontlines, and the advocates fighting for justice. Let us honor their courage and commitment by doubling our efforts to build a future where no one is left behind.