

THE SWALLOWS IB POLICY ON HIV AND AIDS

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HIV/AIDS is one of the big challenges of the world today. Over 30 million people live with HIV and every year more than 2,5 million people are infected. 45 percent of those infected are young people between the ages of 15 and 24, and the majority of them live in poverty stricken countries (UNAIDS: 08 Report on the Global AIDS epidemic, 2008).

Working to prevent the spreading of HIV is challenging. In countries like India and Bangladesh issues related to sex are taboo which makes it difficult to be detailed and nuanced about how HIV is spread. The Swallows is not working directly with HIV/AIDS, nor do our partners. Even so, for all organisations working with development issues it is crucial to have a HIV/AIDS perspective to be able to contribute to an open discussion about HIV/AIDS, break the stigmatisation of HIV positive and spread information crucial to combat HIV.

A world without poverty is not possible to achieve without social justice. Unequal power balances exist in different dimensions. In order to achieve a sound sustainable development there is a need to combat all kinds of unequal power balances. In this respect the combat against HIV/AIDS and the fight against poverty are interlinked. A condition for the fight against HIV/AIDS and poverty to become successful is that the unequal balance of power between women and men is changed, as well as unequal power balances between other groups of people. The Swallows shares the statements and recommendations given by The Swedish Association for Sexuality Education, RFSU, one of SIDA's frame organisations:

- Most people who live with HIV have been infected through sexual contact. Therefore, efforts to curb the HIV epidemic must include sexuality education, the use of condoms, and gender equality initiatives.
- The stigma that still surrounds HIV is demeaning for those living with the disease, which is a threat to prevention.
- Lack of gender equality, discrimination due to sexual orientation, poverty and difficulties to talk about sex are contributing to the problem.
- Use of condoms is crucial to put an end to the spreading. Married women should be able to demand usage of condoms.

The Swallows' recommendations to partners working with HIV and AIDS:

- To base the information about HIV and AIDS on facts and not moral.
- To make sure that the activities related to HIV/AIDS are nondiscriminating.
- This includes people of different sexual orientations. The Swallows believe that everyone has the right to decide their sexual preferences, have a private life and freely choose partner without being subjected to discrimination.
- To seek advice and support from organisations specialised in non-discriminating work with HIV/AIDS.

All activities conducted by The Swallows or financed by The Swallows should follow this policy.