

BANGKOK DECLARATION

by
People Living with HIV/AIDS
in Asia Pacific



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A decade has passed since world leaders ratified the principle of GIPA (Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS) at the Paris AIDS Summit in 1994, but its practice in the Asia Pacific region has been woefully feeble. We, the people living with HIV/AIDS in the region, painfully realise that the disempowering presence of stigma and discrimination; lack of access to treatment and support services; lack of capacity; and poor knowledge on GIPA among governments, other stakeholders and PLWHA networks prevent hundreds of thousands of experienced PLWHA from actively participating in the responses to the epidemic. Our categorical learning in dealing with HIV/AIDS over the last two decades has been that without the well-being and empowerment of PLWHA, GIPA can only be a pipe dream.

True practice of GIPA requires total empowerment of People Living with HIV/AIDS - power that is both generated from within and imparted from outside. This empowerment relates to a healthy and dignified life; a rights and gender sensitive environment that is free of stigma and discrimination; availability of livelihood options, political and decision making capacity; and access to affordable treatment including ARV.

We, representatives of PLWHA networks in Asia Pacific region, therefore, urge all Governments, political parties, civil society organisations, UN, bi- and multilateral agencies, corporates, public and private sectors and the media in the region to create an empowering environment for PLWHA and people affected by HIV through the following measures:

Policy and Decision Making

1. PLWHA representatives should be given direct access to relevant ministries dealing with HIV/AIDS issues
2. PLWHA representatives should be part of decision making bodies related to HIV/AIDS in every country, both in the Government and Non-Government sectors
3. GIPA should be incorporated into national policies as a prevention strategy
4. Legal reforms should be undertaken expeditiously in every country to protect the rights of PLWHA
5. A budget-line dedicated to supporting PLWHA groups should be included in the budget of every country

Access to Treatment and Support Services

1. Universal and free ARV, laboratory tests and OI treatment should be made available in all the countries
2. Every company should have a comprehensive workplace policy, conforming to global guidelines, that protects the rights of infected employees
3. Quality, confidential counselling services should be made available up to the primary health care delivery points

Social and Economic Empowerment

1. National AIDS Committees should be made multisectoral
2. Governments, corporates, public and private sectors should help PLWHA groups, particularly women's groups, with income generation activities, micro credits, grants and revolving funds
3. HIV should be mainstreamed into existing poverty alleviation programmes
4. Social security measures must be initiated for poor PLWHA
5. Large scale leadership and capacity building efforts should be initiated for PLWHA
6. Governments should earmark special programmes and budgets for people affected by HIV, widows and children

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