

Together We Must Do More

My Personal Commitment to Action

As a religious leader, I am convinced that my faith must be more visible and active to halt the spread of HIV and reverse this pandemic.

For three decades now, HIV has continued to spread across all levels of our societies. Stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV continues to fuel ignorance, injustice, denial and hate. At this critical point in the epidemic, I need to be clear in my words and actions that stigma and discrimination towards people living with or affected by HIV is unacceptable.

Fundamental to my faith is the respect for human dignity and the value of human life. Such respect and value is central to my response to HIV.

Therefore, I commit to exercising stronger, more visible, and practical leadership in the response to the HIV pandemic - increasing commitment, deepening meaningful engagement with people living with HIV, and acting decisively to protect human rights within my faith community; through collaboration among other religious leaders of different faiths; and by influencing local, national, regional and global decision-making processes on HIV.

Conscious of the specific needs of all those affected by HIV, this leadership means...

To people living with HIV, I commit myself to:

- working tirelessly to end all stigmatizing attitudes and actions until people living with HIV are fully included in our religious communities and societies;
- supporting concerted efforts and partnerships to provide support including health care and education in ways that respect privacy and dignity;
- seeking to understand and respond to the specific needs and situations of different communities affected by HIV to enable all people living with HIV to participate fully in society;
- providing spiritual support and resources to give hope and enable positive living, assuring you that HIV cannot separate you from love, mercy, compassion, forgiveness.

To children, I commit to:

- Recognizing your rights, including health, education and support, that will help you celebrate childhood and learn values and ethical practices for safer and healthier living.

To young people, I commit to:

- Listening to your needs and empowering you with the values and support to help protect you from violence and suppression and from behaviours that create risks for yourself and others;
- Enabling and facilitating your leadership and participation.

To women and girls, I commit to:

- Recognizing your special vulnerability and roles as caregivers and mothers and working tirelessly to ensure you have the services you require for prevention, treatment, care and support.
- Exercising respect and challenging any oppressive systems of power within my religious community and society which fuel violence and injustice;
- Providing space for your voice and leadership in our communities.

To men and boys, I commit to:

- Encouraging understanding of power that allows people to relate to one another with dignity and love.
- Supporting leadership and decision making that addresses the root causes of HIV.

To my religious community, I commit to:

- Doing all I can to break the barriers of silence and exclusion to fully and openly include people living with HIV and their families in our religious communities;
- Leading by example and encouraging my religious community to deepen its engagement in the response to HIV, including advocating for prevention, treatment, care and support for all.

To networks, organizations and public institutions, I commit to:

- Fully supporting all efforts to extend services and support that will enable an HIV-free generation by 2015;
- Challenging and supporting governments to meet their moral duty to implement their promises on HIV in their priorities, practices and financial support.
- partnering with you to combine our experiences, approaches and expertise to reach our common goal of halting the spread of HIV and reversing the pandemic.

To those I am addressing in this pledge and to other religious leaders who join me in this covenant/pledge, I commit to:

- reporting through available channels every 18 months¹ how I have worked to fulfill my pledge.

Signed:

¹ This would be: September 2011, March 2013 and September 2014.