



# FOCUS ON



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## RIGHT TO FOOD AND HIV/AIDS

Enabling people to feed themselves is the primary obligation of states. When individuals are unable to do so, in cases such as when HIV/AIDS makes them physically incapable or when loss of infected parents leaves orphans struggling, the state is obligated to provide direct assistance.

### Linkages

HIV/AIDS makes people more vulnerable to food insecurity; in turn, food insecurity makes them even more susceptible to full-blown AIDS. Mobility and migration due to food insecurity and the effects of malnutrition heighten susceptibility to HIV/AIDS. Improved nutrition can extend the productive lives of HIV/AIDS patients, enabling them to provide for themselves and their families more effectively. Providing assistance to HIV/AIDS orphans can deter the high-risk behaviour that is often bartered for sustenance.

The impact of the disease on human, social, and financial factors results in loss of labour, the subsequent loss of natural and financial resources, and consequently, strain posed on people living with those affected by HIV/AIDS. Stigma often leads to marginalization and discrimination, not only of the person affected by the disease, but of their whole family. Loss of knowledge is one of the less tangible losses associated with the loss of a family member; this too often leaves a young population ill-equipped to manage the impacts of the epidemic and to maintain safe, sustainable livelihoods. It also results in decreasing school attendance among orphans and vulnerable children.

### Human Rights-Based Approach

Food security is generally needs-based – food and resources are made available to people because they need them. When a family member is infected with HIV/AIDS, the family's needs increase. A rights-based approach considers that every person has the human right to feed themselves. When a family member is infected with HIV/AIDS, the family's increased vulnerability simultaneously increases the state's obligations to provide for them and protect them against discrimination.

A human rights-based approach that refers to the right to health, the right to adequate food and the right to an adequate standard of living on the one hand, and the human rights principles of participation, accountability, non-discrimination, transparency, human dignity, empowerment and the rule of law on the other, can provide a framework upon which HIV/AIDS programs can build. Discrimination against women is another vital issue when considering responses to HIV/AIDS. Women's economic dependence on men, their high poverty levels and lack of access to opportunities and resources, contribute to their susceptibility to HIV/

