

The African Synod and Access to quality medicines

Access to drugs is part of the Human Right to health, yet 270 million people lack access to essential medicines of quality. Millions die of sickness for which medicines exist because these are too expensive, of bad quality, or inexistent. Malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDs kill 6 million people/year, most of them in Africa. Every 30 seconds a child dies of malaria. Pregnant women are the highest adult risk group, as less than 5% have access to effective treatment. Improving access to medicines could save 4 million lives/year.

The **access to quality medicines** is made difficult by the existence of patents that raise the price. Only when patents expire (10 to 15 years) can generics be produced and competition lower prices. Rich countries, medicine producers, oppose the issue of «Compulsory licenses» to buy or produce generics, for Public Health Reasons.

The quality of medicines is a key issue for public health. Nearly half of the medicines in African countries are counterfeit or low quality, and they cause the death of 200,000 malaria patients /year. Bad quality drugs represent a serious risk to people's health: result in death, treatment failure and create resistance. Medicines exported from the EU lack quality control. The EU puts the responsibility of this control on the country using the medicine. African countries lack capacity and means to do it. The result is low quality standard medicines.

What the African Synod says in Proposition 51 on HIV/AIDS and 52 on Malaria

HIV/AIDS is a pandemic, together with malaria and tuberculosis, which is decimating African populations and severely damaging their economic and social life. It is truly an issue of integral development and justice, which requires a holistic approach and response by the Church.

Those who are **sick with AIDS in Africa are victims of injustice, because they often do not receive the same quality of treatment as in Europe.**

The Church asks that funds destined for those with AIDS be actually used for this purpose, and **recommends that African patients receive the same quality of treatment as in Europe.....**

Malaria remains the worst killer on the African continent and its Islands, contributing enormously to the aggravation of poverty. We appreciate all the initiatives directed towards combating this sickness. However, we acknowledge that more needs to be done if any remarkable results are to be expected. Therefore the Synod proposes the following...

- that governments be urged to develop more consistent and sustained policies and programmes aimed at the eradication of malaria;
- **that manufacturers of medicines make them affordable, so as to save more lives;** and
- sustain efforts to develop a vaccine against malaria.

AEFJN and Access to Medicines of Quality

AIM: To promote access to quality medicines at affordable prices for people with modest incomes in Africa.

GOAL 1. Getting the most out of players engaged in Africa and Europe to bring the Charter into practice.

Strategy: Spread the Charter; Join with others to put pressure on suppliers and manufacturers for quality medicines.

Actions: Formulate the Charter in a manner understandable to actors on the ground and send it to them. To ensure compliance with the charter by signatories, to contact experts in quality control (audits).

GOAL 2. Promote the quality control of medicines exported to Africa from the EU.

Strategy: Lobby the EU institutions to promote a common policy on quality control for exports; Network with national and international NGOs (mostly African).

Action: To research the EU member states legislation on medicines export. Analyze the inconsistency between the legislation and the OMS requirements. Prepare a folder on the issue to be presented to national governments and to the European Institutions (EC & EP) and lobby them towards a Directive on the quality control of medicines for export.

GOAL 3: Influence the EU policies on intellectual property rights so as to promote access to medicines at affordable prices for all

Action: Become aware of the current WTO rules; Gather information from the grassroots on the difficulties caused by the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). Gather information on the IPRs in the EU regulations (TRIPS +) and ACTA (Anti counterfeit Trade Agreement). Follow the EPA negotiations on services (health). Lobby the EU Institutions.