

American Jewish World Service
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World AIDS Day 2006 Statement
Ruth Messinger, President

Today, the frontline of the AIDS movement is global and diverse - as are the many challenges we are confronting.

AIDS carries a history of stigma and social discrimination that we must transcend if we are to respond to the pandemic with solidarity, support and compassion for the infected and affected among us. Faith communities have a special capacity to address the social barriers that have thus far prevented fully effective responses to the AIDS pandemic.

Faith communities also have a mandate to take on these challenges. Jewish tradition teaches that virtually nothing can supersede our responsibility to save a life. My organization, American Jewish World Service, interprets this injunction to mean that we must *take action* to address AIDS! The actions we need to take are also clear -- innovative solutions have been developed by affected communities, families and individuals. They have also articulated their priorities for national and international policies and interventions. The global community now needs to commit to fully supporting these efforts and priorities with increased financial and technical resources, as well as with moral support. We have the affluence and influence to do this. We must go beyond conferences and ideology to engage with, support, and promote the leadership of people around the globe infected with HIV and affected by AIDS.

Only by doing this can we meet our obligation to protecting life. We can change the course of the future by helping people protect themselves from infection. And by providing treatment for those already infected we can prevent the deaths of another three million women, men and children projected for 2007 and every year after that.

Returning again to the Jewish tradition, we are taught that "It is not your responsibility to finish the work of repairing the world, but neither are you free to desist from it." On World AIDS Day, let us renew and expand our collective commitment – to “keep the promise” that we will take action to help those people who are living with AIDS, their families and their communities. Together, we *can* stop AIDS.

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