

## WCC begins work to bring HIV response back to forefront

News

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A women's group in Chennai, India, learns about HIV and AIDS as they play a game designed by the Madras Council of Social Service. (Photo by Paul Jeffrey)

Through a grant from UNAIDS, the World Council of Church's Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiatives and Advocacy program will host meetings in four countries as part of an effort to bring HIV and AIDS response back to national agendas—this time with a focus on sustainability.

"There is large potential for what we can do together," said Gracia Ross, program executive for the WCC Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiatives and Advocacy program. "The challenge posed by HIV is not finished with medications; we must work in addressing the inequalities that drive the HIV epidemic, and for that we need the help of everyone."

Solving inequalities is an imperative of social justice, Ross added. “The faith sector has to be on our side—the side of people living with HIV and the side of those living in the margins,” she said. “There are many issues on which we can collaborate in order to create a comprehensive and integral response.”

HIV is being forgotten in many places—but if we ask those who live with it, we will see how present their needs really are, said Ross. “We want the faith sector and the communities to have a conversation and focus on actions.”

Another crucial part of the new project is ensuring the faith sector will have the most up-to-date technical information on HIV.

As the first consultation begins in India, WCC is partnering with the organization Human Touch, which provides support for orphans and vulnerable children.

The meeting in India took place at the end of September. Meetings in the Dominican Republic, Indonesia, and Jamaica are planned for this month. Meetings will include people with HIV, key affected populations, faith organizations, and churches in addition to national HIV programs. —World Council of Churches