

# A Report of a Theological Workshop Focussing on HIV and AIDs related Stigma

Marion Smith the Honorary Editor of the Bulletin of ABTAPL (Association of British Theological & Philosophical Libraries <http://www.abtapl.org.uk>) has asked that ANZTLA circulate information about a this report on behalf of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS.

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## Background

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) recognizes and values the efforts carried out by religious groups in care and treatment of people living with HIV infection and AIDS. This report is the first of what UNAIDS hopes will be several documents reporting on the work of leaders from different religions (Christian, Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist) addressing the challenge of HIV and AIDS from their own religious perspective.

There is a need for a broader engagement on issues related to HIV by religious leaders, and theologians, to support those working in the field. One important area is the eradication of stigma and discrimination towards People Living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA). Stigmatization and discrimination of those who are HIV-positive is a violation of human dignity. It also fuels further infections, as fear of the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV and AIDS, undermines willingness to seek out testing. Knowing one's H status is an important aspect of efforts by individuals and communities to halt the further spread of infection.

In order to start this process of collaboration IJINAIDS supported a workshop to which 62 leading academic theologians from Christian traditions were invited. It took place in Windhoek, Namibia in December 2003. One result is the framework for theological reflection included in this report. This is a text that solely reflects the views of those who have signed it. The participants were invited in their personal capacities and they acknowledge that in many cases, doctrinal formulation rests with the competent authorities within their respective communions.

## The Report's contents include:

Outcome from the workshop - HIV and AIDS related stigma: a framework for theological reflection

### Speeches

- HIV and AIDS: the challenge and the context Stigma and discrimination: incarnation and the Namibian experience, by Father Richard W Bauer
- Why should Churches respond to issues of stigma and discrimination in reaction to HIV and AIDS?, by Rev Robert J. Vuhlo
- HIV- and AIDS-related stigma: living with the experience by Rev Johannes Petrus Heath
- Conceptualizing stigma, by Gil Paterson
- HIV- and AIDS-related stigma: possible theological approaches: Stigma and Christian theology, by Father Enda MacDonald
- HIV- and AIDS-related stigma: implications for theological education, research, communication and community. Stigma: implications for the theological agenda, by Dr Denise Ackermann
- HIV- and ADS-related stigma: responding to the challenge. Stigma: communicating the message, influencing church leaders and members, by Dr Musa Dube