

Dear Friends,

During the last two years of COVID-19 and other global crises, progress against the HIV pandemic has faltered, resources have shrunk, and millions of lives are at risk as a result. This year, UNAIDS is challenging us to tackle the inequalities and inequities in HIV prevention and treatment. Inequity exists between countries and within countries. In Madagascar, only 15% of those infected with HIV know their status while in the USA, 87% of those infected know their status. Both countries are striving to reach at risk populations.



Woman being tested for HIV during celebration sponsored by FJKM Women of the Church branch, Nov 9, 2022. Photo credit: Elizabeth Turk.

The Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (FJKM), PC(USA)'s partner church, sees tackling the HIV problem as important part of what it means to serve God. One of Madagascar's goals is to decrease the mother-to-child transmission of HIV. If pregnant women get tested for HIV and those who test positive for HIV take anti-retroviral medication (ART), then the rate of transmission to newborns can be drastically reduced. However, in Madagascar, less than half of pregnant women seek prenatal care from mid-wives or doctors. As a result, Madagascar has one of the world's highest rates of maternal mortality and continued maternal transmission of HIV to newborns.

This year, the FJKM is highlighting the need for pregnant women to seek prenatal care and get tested for HIV and to take ART if they test positive for HIV. It included training sessions on this at the biannual pastors' continuing education this August and at 2 events of the Dorkasy, FJKM's Women of the Church branch. Over 1300 pastors and 3000 women were trained. Congregations are being challenged to share "5 minutes on health" during worship services and highlight the need for prenatal care and treatment for pregnant women with HIV. Free HIV testing is being offered at special church events and celebrations. PC(USA) has supported FJKM in many of these training and testing events.



Elizabeth and colleague, Dr. Voahangy Ranaivoson, sharing about HIV and COVID-19 at celebration event sponsored by FJKM Women of the Church. Nov 10, 2022. Photo credit: Patrick Raolison .



Women attending Women of the Church celebration where HIV training and free testing took place. Nov 10, 2022. Photo credit: Elizabeth Turk.

To learn about the ways your congregation can help raise HIV awareness and address the problem in the USA and around the world, visit www.pcusa.org/toolkits/hiv.



Members of FJKM Women of the Church taking part in a two-day celebration which included training on HIV and free HIV testing. Nov 10, 2022 . Photo credit: Elizabeth Turk.

Let us pray:

God of life, we pray for those in our community and around the world who are infected and affected by HIV and AIDS. May we the Church work to make sure that all who need care receive it. Amen.