**State ways in which the church can help HIV/AIDS victims.**

Religious leaders could potentially make a considerable contribution to HIV/AIDS prevention. Due to their status in society they have been progressively included as essential contributors in the fight against HIV. The church has maximized her efforts to promote awareness about the disease. These efforts generally range from the provision of facts about HIV and AIDS, its modes of transmission, various types of high-risk behavior that increase its transmission, education for responsible and positive living, mainly focusing on human sexuality and related issues.

The ways implemented by the church include:

1. **HIV and AIDS Awareness Programs**

The church has maximized her efforts to promote awareness about the disease. These efforts generally range from the provision of facts about HIV and AIDS, its modes of transmission, various types of high-risk behavior that increase its transmission, education for responsible and positive living, mainly focusing on human sexuality and related issues. This theme is treated in the light of the church’s moral teaching emphasizing its giftings and purpose of conjugal love essentially connected with procreation as established in God’s creative plan.

The Church’s awareness programs also focus on the intimately related problems of drug addiction and alcoholism. These expose the teenagers and young adults to the high-risk behavior, particularly in matters pertaining to sexual promiscuity; thus they may become infected with the disease and transmit it to their partners. Such awareness is established on the church’s theology of the human body.

Furthermore, the church sheds light on the Christian vocation towards the I-IIV and AIDS infected and affected. The key aspects in the program are Christian love and compassion to the afflicted, utilizing the examples of Jesus Christ and the Good Samaritan to be concretely manifested in attending to the material needs (food, shelter, clothing, nursing care, preparation of the last will and testament, funeral arrangements), and spiritual needs (strengthening faith in God’s presence in suffering and at the hour of death, and hope in eternal life, highlighting the need for reconciliation with their marriage partners, family and with God before death, preparing for the reception of the sacraments of Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick and the Eucharist, assuring moral support and strength in the last moments of life).

1. **Production and Distribution of Materials**

The church is also fully involved in producing and distributing HIV and AIDS materials as an integral part of the prevention campaign. These materials range from posters, audio-visual cassettes, handbooks and booklets for counselling dealing with the role of the counsellor and how to conduct counselling sessions, booklets on the methodology of community participatory skills to help community-based trainers and leaders, manuals to guide those working with and caring for patients, and guides to help leaders and trainers to facilitate awareness workshops and seminars, just to mention a few.

The church also distributes food, clothing, medical facilities, bedding for patients, orphans and grandparents taking care of them, whose economic conditions cannot meet these basic needs. The church also runs nursing homes for sufferers, and orphanages for infected children whose parents have died from the disease and have nobody to care for them. These are some of the major areas in which the church in Africa has manifested her active participation in responding to the problem. More important is the fact that the church has been able to reach out to communities and levels of society in the continent which governments and their agencies are unable to reach. Moreover, the church, by her Christian ideals and commitment has been able to offer a greater degree of compassionate care to the infected and affected that governments and NGOs are unable to offer.

1. **Networking and Collaborations**

Churches, NGOs and governmental organizations participate fully in partnerships which facilitate the sharing of resources such as research and training facilities and qualified personnel. Such bilateral and multilateral networking is a resource in acquiring new information about the pandemic, availability of material and human resources, and capacity building in the overall fight against it.

This networking focuses on the sharing of common goals and mutual agreement for major policy issues regarding family life education, fidelity in marriage, chastity in marriage, abstinence from sex before marriage, condom use, testing for HIV and AIDS, counselling and caring for people living with the disease. What is stressed upon is the entire process of what is shared in common rather than on differences, which can jeopardize collaborative effort among groups.

1. **Training**

The church offers training to priests, school and hospital chaplains, youth leaders, social workers, council of the laity leaders, leaders of small Christian communities, women’s groups, youth groups, community-based health workers, nurses, and people already living with HIV and AIDS.

They are trained in basic counselling skills, case identification, basic and nursing techniques**.**