

***Stigma and discrimination* contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS.**

The fear of facing that stigma and discrimination keeps many people living with HIV/AIDS from seeking medical treatment. They may avoid revealing their status, or avoid practicing safer sex.

Like HIV/AIDS, stigma and discrimination are universal: every person living with HIV – as well as their family, friends and health care providers – may have to deal with the destructive nature of stigma and discrimination. Two decades into the epidemic, we have learned that stigma and discrimination are the greatest barriers to:

- preventing further infections
- providing adequate care, support and treatment, and
- easing the impact of HIV/AIDS.

HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination lead to the violation of human rights, and hinder our ability to:

- prevent new infections
- provide good care, support and treatment, and
- lessen the associated burdens of living with HIV/AIDS.

Freedom from discrimination is a fundamental human right. Highlighting HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination reminds us of our rights and responsibilities as members of the human community.

AIDS attacks the body: Prejudice attacks the spirit. One is caused by a virus: One is caused by ignorance. Both can kill.