
Advocacy case studies

ADVOCATING ON HIV IN EGYPT

COUNTRY:	Egypt
THEMES:	Health; HIV; human rights; stigma and discrimination
ADVOCACY APPROACHES:	Government officials: educating; government officials: meeting with; using human rights; using the media; working in alliances and coalitions

Freedom Programme (FP), a Tearfund partner in Egypt, advocates on behalf of people living with HIV and medical professionals involved in their care.

FP wanted to reduce the stigma suffered by those living with HIV and improve their quality of life, by helping them gain access to antiretrovirals (ARVs) and other medicines at affordable (subsidised) rates. Having access to these drugs would mean people living with HIV would not have to be treated in isolation from others in hospitals, clinics and dental practices.

FP gathered support for its cause, working in coalition with other non-government organisations and arranging public meetings attended by the Ministry of Health, the press, and Christian and Muslim religious leaders. These meetings helped to raise awareness about the issue of HIV and were an opportunity to share the stories and experiences of people living with the virus. FP also held separate meetings with officials from the Ministry of Health, which were covered by the media.

Its advocacy worked: the government agreed to lower the price of ARVs by 25 per cent for people living with HIV. However, while this represents a step in the right direction, FP wants to see the subsidy increased for ARVs and extended to cover other medicines as well.

FP also advocated for the rights of doctors working on HIV, lobbying the Ministry of Health to address the issues they faced. Doctors had no rights or protection, and were often threatened with needles, leaving many of them traumatised. They also suffered stigma and discrimination, due to a widespread lack of understanding around the issue of HIV. FP's lobbying was successful, and the Ministry of Health granted these doctors a full package of allowances and protection.

FP is now turning its attention to supporting drug users, especially those affected by HIV.