

GLOBAL: High food prices put pressure on HIV programmes

Steadily increasing prices could lead to a lack of affordable and nourishing food, endangering the lives of people living with HIV in the developing world, experts have said.

As prices continue to rise, people will start to buy cheaper, less nutritious food and may begin to skip meals - in Lesotho we are already seeing people skipping meals because they can't afford food," Alan Whiteside, an economist with South Africa's University of KwaZulu-Natal, told a press conference at the International AIDS Conference in Mexico on Thursday.

"For people living with HIV, who require more nutrition than healthy people, this will have terrible consequences."

Rising oil prices, the impact of climate change and the loss of agricultural land to biofuel production have all contributed to the current crisis affecting people in the developing world, most of whom rely on agriculture for their livelihood.

"The effects of climate change have made food production less secure, droughts longer, and when the rains come they are heavier and damage crops," Whiteside explained.

He noted that HIV-positive people on antiretroviral (ARV) medication, who skipped doses because they did not have food to take with their medication, risked developing drug resistance, which could lead to treatment failure.

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