



Switching from a professionally run catering service to a community-based one

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Issue

A shared meal fulfils many needs which go beyond the simple desire for nourishment and allows the person to better come to terms with his/her illness. Above all the meal is a place to exchange and create a bond among PLWHA and take their medicines without being judged by others.

The NGOs offer meals to their members, often using professionals from catering services. This kind of organisation has many disadvantages which have led us to turn to a community-based management of this service. How to make this switch from a professionally-run service to a community-based one?

Description

For several years, AIDES-Paris used the services of a catering company to provide meals for about 40 people on a daily basis. This organisation soon began to show two limits:

- the NGO took on a consumerist and charitable role,
- the meal lost its significance as a place of exchange and solidarity.

Not to lose sight of its objectives, the NGO gathered its participants together in order to:

- share their thoughts on the existing situation,
- collectively put forward a new proposition: a weekly meal prepared by PLWAs, supported by the NGO's activists,
- identify everybody's place and task: the people buy the food, cook the meal and serve it, which is all financed by the NGO. The activists manage the social interaction between the people.

Lessons learned

A community-based management of the meals allows:

- people to be more concerned and involved in the group,
- people to develop their self-esteem by their contribution to the action,
- the meal time to become a true place for exchange and solidarity.

Next steps

This involvement of PLWHAs is used in a variety of forms in other actions.



Long live our Wednesdays!



AIDES, a French NGO

Set up in 1984, AIDES is the largest HIV/AIDS community-based organisation in France, with centres in over 70 cities. We support partner organisations in Central and Eastern Europe, North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa.

Our main goals:

- To inform vulnerable people about HIV/AIDS prevention and testing
- To support PLWHAs, (social & professional integration, therapeutic education)
- To advocate for the rights of PLWHAs.



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