

Vatican plans pastoral guidelines for church personnel in AIDS care

VATICAN CITY - The Vatican is committed to publishing a set of pastoral guidelines for church personnel engaged in AIDS care and prevention, but it probably won't happen for at least a year, a Vatican official said.

The guidelines are expected to treat the issue of condoms in AIDS prevention, but as part of a much wider approach to the question of the treatment and spread of the disease.

Monsignor Jean-Marie Mpendawatu, undersecretary of the Pontifical Council for Health Care Ministry, told reporters Nov. 22 that the first step toward the guidelines was the imminent publication of the acts of a conference on AIDS sponsored by the Vatican last May.

The conference looked at prevention strategies, rejecting condom campaigns in favor of behavioral change, and also examined issues of medical research and treatment.

Monsignor Mpendawatu said the Vatican was "committed to working in a rapid fashion" on the guidelines for pastoral workers, using much of the material from the conference.

"We promise this, and I think it will be useful for the whole church," he said.

But he said the guidelines would not be drawn up until another project is completed - the updating of the Vatican's "Charter for Health Care Workers," which dates to 1994. The revisions of that text are nearly complete, but officials said it would probably not be ready for publication until late 2012.

Two issues that are expected to receive ample treatment in the revised edition of the charter are management of public health care and legislation on biomedical questions, said Father Augusto Chendi, undersecretary of the health care council.