Leveraging on existing HIV community engagement to respond to COVID-19 pandemic, Challenges and Opportunities: A Civil Society Organization (CSO) perspective

Presentation By: Zimbabwe National Network of People Living with HIV (ZNNP+)

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ZNNP+ Background

- Zimbabwe National Network of People Living with HIV (ZNNP+) is the national network of people living with HIV.
- Advocacy-based organization that serves the interests of people living with HIV (PLHIV) and ensure their rights are respected.
- The organization has a national reach with structures at national and sub-national levels.
- The organization focus on HIV prevention, treatment and care.
- Create support systems for PLHIV through the support group model and other models of peer support.
How COVID-19 affected PLHIV

- Failure to access health facilities for regular refills
- Mental health challenges
- Gender Based Violence
- Limited access to sexual and reproductive health services
- Stigma and Discrimination
- Forced Disclosure
- Suspension of supportive services
- Limited income generating activities which affected their lives
Critical Issues to be addressed to maintain HIV and AIDS gains

• The overarching issue to be addressed is to maintain the continuation of HIV Services and the include:
  • HIV Testing Services
  • Uninterrupted access to HIV medicines
  • Care and support services – psychosocial support
  • Retention of clients on ART
  • Strengthening of Differentiated Services
  • Access to diagnostics
  • Integration of COVID-19 response with HIV and TB services
Advocacy Strategies and Best Practices

During the first lockdown in March 2020 ZNNP+ conducted a rapid assessment among PLHIV to assess their concerns. Below are some of the issues raised:

- Concern for my own health: 31%
- Concern about family members’ health: 19%
- My ability to get medications: 18%
- Isolation: 14%
- Stigma related to HIV status: 7%
- I cannot work on the streets: 4%
- I will not get the help and security of my daily living because I am disabled and…: 2%
- Because PLHIV are said to be more vulnerable to the virus: 1%
- Family members finding out I am taking ARVs: 1%
- My eternal life: 1%
KUTABILA PLATFORM
CALL CENTRE FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV & THEIR COMMUNITIES

TOLL FREE
08080441

CALL FREE AND GET LINKED
1. HIV prevention and treatment
2. Psycho-social support services
3. Key Population and Youth friendly services
4. Impact mitigation of COVID-19 and HIV
5. SRHR services

HOW TO GET CONNECTED

1. CALL FREE!!!
   08080441
   Call 08080441 and wait for the welcome message

2. SELECT
   Select your Provincial Agent on your Dialpad

3. CONNECTED
   Wait to be connected. You’re connected

ADD EXTENSION ACCORDING TO YOUR AREA

BULAWAYO: 0
HARARE: 1
MANICALAND: 2
MASH CENTRAL: 3
MASH EAST: 4
MASH WEST: 5
MASH NORTH: 6
MASH SOUTH: 7
MIDLANDS: 8

YOUTH, KP & GENERAL ENQUIRIES: #
Issues Raised Through the Call Centre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Total Issues Raised</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to Health Services</td>
<td>877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ART Availability</td>
<td>582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COVID-19</td>
<td>422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livelihoods</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User Fees</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal Health</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Disasters</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescents</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stigma and Discrimination</td>
<td>402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Based Violence</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRHR</td>
<td>772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Success of the Call Centre

- After closure of health facilities and healthcare workers went on strike due to COVID-19 related issues
- Calls came through the call centre with members raising concerns by failing to access services
- ZNNP+ virtually engaged with MoHCC, City Health Department, PEPFAR partners and representatives of the sector of PLHIV
- Resolved to offer HIV treatment services through Zimbabwe Technical Assistance, Training and Education Centre for Health (ZIM-TTECH) a PEPFAR partner through outreach services in Harare which was the most affected area
- ZNNP+ engaged the recipients of care in Harare for their preferred outreach centres and they were agreed
- ZIM-TTECH team would then move around the health facilities offering services like ART refills, RVLT and TPT
How Stakeholders can leverage on HIV and AIDS structures to Accelerate COVID-19 Response

- Community Systems that are used in HIV and AIDS response can be used for COVID-19 response at community level.
- Network of volunteers at community in HIV and AIDS response can be used in COVID-19 response particularly awareness raising, referrals strengthening and hygiene practices.
- Integration of COVID-19 and HIV and AIDS services for continuation of services.
- Peer support systems which have been a success in HIV and AIDS response can be used in COVID-19 response at community level.
- Good and successful practices in HIV and AIDS can be used in COVID-19 response.
Conclusion

- Good practices in HIV are applicable to COVID-19 response
- The call center for virtual support to PLHIV need to be sustained and fundraising efforts are underway
- The call center can be used in any health emergency issues
- Being used for demand creation activities in HIV and AIDS response like routine viral load testing, TPT and sexual and reproductive health services
- Engagement with various stakeholders helped addressing issues that affected PLHIV
- ZNNP+ continue to support PLHIV in Zimbabwe in the context of COVID-19
Thank You!