

**MUNYA MANDIPAZA – ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR –
INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS LIVING WITH
OR PERSONALLY AFFECTED BY HIV AIDS (INERELA+)**

***SESSION TITLE: PRIORITISING THE RIGHT TO HEALTH AND WELL BEING – RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM SECTORS THAT CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE***

**TOPIC: THE ROLE OF FAITH BASED ORGANISATIONS IN
PROMOTING CHANGE AND ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS
BASED APPROACH**



 **AIDS 2022**



Human Dignity And Rights – Repeal Of Laws On HIV Transmission

- Religious Leaders from Faith Based Organisations have played an ongoing role and affirmed our commitment to human rights, dignity and worth of the human person created in God's image and infinitely precious in God's sight and to the equal rights of men and women ,young, and the vulnerable.
- In March 2022, UNAIDS acknowledged Zimbabwe's parliament for repealing section 79 of the Criminal Law Code, which criminalizes HIV transmission. This guarantees the right to health. The criminalization of HIV transmission is ineffective, discriminatory and undermines efforts to reduce new HIV infections. Such laws actively discourage people from getting tested for HIV and from being referred to the appropriate treatment and prevention services.

https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/pressreleaseandstatementarchive/2022/march/20220318_law-hiv-transmission-zimbabwe

Leadership and Capacity Building Through The INERELA+ SAVE Toolkit



- INERELA+ works closely with governments and religious institutions to integrate the **SAVE prevention methodology** into national curricula and strategies.
- Our investment in capacity building and leadership development of Religious Leaders through our SAVE model has played a positive role in fighting stigma, discrimination which undermines epidemic response thereby ensuring that vulnerable members of communities are reached out with services.
- Through partnerships, National Aids Council Zimbabwe (NAC) has been capacitated using the INERELA+ SAVE toolkit in our shared vision **of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS related deaths**. NAC has been working well with sex workers and men who have sex with men without stigmatising them.
- Our SAVE prevention strategy has been incorporated into Mozambique's national AIDS strategy; Malawi and the DRC use it at national level thereby guaranteeing the right to health for the vulnerable populations.

N.B. We now have an updated SAVE toolkit (third edition) which is aligned to the Global UNAIDS strategy.

S = Safer practices covering all modes OF HIV transmission

A = Access to treatment and provision of nutrition (healthy diet) and clean water.


V = Voluntary Counselling and Testing – this applies to our support groups

E = through education, advocacy, skills building, knowledge of gender, economic and health issues

Engagements With Government

- Religious Leaders from the Faith Based Sector have informed political party manifestos on health issues in the past
- In Kenya the FBOs have informed HIV data protection policy at National Level which came into effect in 2019. This has encouraged practices that support rights for persons who are at risk of HIV or Living with HIV.
- Our Religious Leaders in Kenya are in the task force that led to the development of the Faith sector guideline at national level that is in support of the national HIV response strategies.

Human Dignity And Rights- SADC Model Law On GBV



STOP
GENDER-
BASED
VIOLENCE

- FBOs have mobilised community activists, law makers, politicians and others to change laws relating to HIV and social justice. This has resulted in the repeal of laws relating to the criminalization of HIV transmission, people living with HIV, as well as other laws and policies criminalizing sex work and sexual diversity.
- INERELA+, in collaboration with various partners, has been at the forefront of activism to change laws and policies on HIV and GBV – We called for the adoption of the **SADC Model Law on GBV** which was achieved in December 2021. This will serve, protect and empower/capacitate survivors of GBV by ensuring that synergised legal mechanisms are in place for the respect of equal human rights

Promotion of Change Through Role Models

- Through Religious Leaders we have worked to defend human dignity by addressing human rights from an ethical and theological perspective
- In April 2021, Canon Gideon Byamugisha the Co-founder of INERELA+, a voice for the voiceless and a thought leader in the fight against HIV AIDS participated as a key representative and shared his lived experience at the UNAIDS multi stakeholder high level meeting task force ahead of the June 2021 high level meeting on AIDS





AIDS 2022

Advocacy Through Change Agents

- Faith Based Organisations are strong voices for the people. The late INERELA+ Patron Archbishop Desmond Tutu was a man of enormous courage and powerful voice in the fight against AIDS, combating denial, demanding access to treatment for all, calling out against discrimination of people living with HIV, and championing the human rights of vulnerable people, women, and children.
- His work on HIV and tuberculosis prevention and treatment changed global paradigms and saved many lives.
- He fought for access to lifesaving medicines. Not only did the late Archbishop call on pharmaceutical companies to make AIDS medicines accessible but he advocated for prevention of HIV infection in adolescents and young people.
- The late Archbishop Tutu co-chaired the UNAIDS commission on HIV prevention in 2011 that led to setting of bold global targets for HIV.



Recommendations

- We have learnt that FBOs are a powerful fuel and force of social transformation. Working with faith-based organizations (FBOs) provides an important public health opportunity to enhance community involvement to address the HIV epidemic.
- Faith based organisations have a long term sustainable presence as they oversee health and education institutions within their communities.
- International solidarity is essential and funders should take advantage of the considerable contribution that FBOs make for them to continue to bring about change and advance human rights based approaches to laws and policies.
- By taking on board lessons learned through HIV, can aid in reimagining systems of health to accelerate the health-related commitments of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



Conclusion

Thank you!

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