

## Zimbabwe National Network of People Living with HIV presents innovative community led approach at International AIDS Society

Submitted By: **Gilton Kadziyanhike**

The Zimbabwe National Network of People Living with HIV (ZNNP+) left its footprint at the International AIDS Society held in Brisbane, Australia from 23-26 Jul 2023. The organization's oral abstract presentation highlighted the community's successful efforts to identify out-of-care pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, as well as children aged 0-14,



**Mr. G. Kadziyanhike, ZNNP+ Strategic Information and Evaluation Manager making a presentation at the IAS 2023.**

using a network of peer supporters known as mentor mothers and young community HIV/AIDS service agents (yCHASAs). The initiative not only brings about a sense of belonging in those receiving care, but it also improves accessibility to current treatment and care information. An appreciative client commented " **if it wasn't for ZNNP+, me and my sister's child would have died of AIDS**".

The importance of community-led responses cannot be overstated. While medical advances have made it possible for People living with HIV (PLHIV) to manage their condition effectively, stigma and discrimination continue to be major barriers to accessing care. By empowering communities to take ownership of their own health, ZNNP+ is helping to break down these barriers and ensure that everyone has access to the care they need. Between Jul 2022-September 2022, the mentor mothers referred 1,612 individuals for HIV services. The 52 who had an unknown HIV status got tested and had a positive result. The newly diagnosed were initiated on treatment and linked to ZNNP+ support groups and received mental health counselling from the Mental Health Specialist under *Kutabila Platform*. During the same period, 48 (3%) of those who had been interrupted in treatment (IIT) were successfully returned to care. 10 survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) were successfully linked to appropriate services.



**y-CHASA Kudzaishe Mutsvedu (right) with mentor Kerina Sibanda (left) at Dambridge Clinic in Kwekwe district.**

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**ZNNP+ Officer at a plenary discussion at the IAS.**

The success and recognition of ZNNP+'s mentor mother program is a testament to the power of community-led responses to HIV prevention, treatment, and care. By working together, we can make significant strides in the HIV response and ensure that everyone has access to the care and support they need to live healthy and fulfilling lives. Congratulations to community cadres, Ministry of Health, funding partners especially ViiV Healthcare, PEPFAR and OPHID who have strengthened this innovative and effective strategy and made it to be showcased at an international forum, we look forward to seeing more community-led initiatives in the future.

*Reach us on Kutabila virtual Platform Toll Free: 08080441*