

The MIPA Forums: communities shaping the HIV priorities



With support from the National AIDS Trust Fund through National AIDS Council, ZNNP+ coordinates MIPA Forums in Zimbabwe.

As the umbrella body that represents the interests of people living HIV in Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe National Network of People Living with HIV

(ZNNP+) has the mandate to coordinate the PLHIV sector as well as to collect and disseminate critical HIV health information. To make sure that there is meaningful involvement of people living with HIV in this process, ZNNP+ recently hosted the first quarter District, Provincial and National - Meaningful Involvement of People Living with HIV (MIPA) meetings. These meetings were aimed at making sure that people living with HIV are kept central to the creation and determination of the policies, funding, services, research, and initiatives that affect them. The ZNNP+ Executive Director, Mr Tatenda Makoni assured MIPA members that the organisation would continue to find innovative ways of responding to the challenges that people living with HIV face. In his presentation, he highlighted that the organisation recently upscaled the functions of the Kutabila Virtual Platform by recruiting a medical doctor, a lawyer and a psychologist who will be available to assist members via the Kutabila Toll free number 08080441.

The national MIPA meeting was split into two meetings that is, the Southern and Northern Region meetings to enable easy coordination of the processes as well as to make sure that the organisation adheres to the COVID-19 social distancing regulations. The Southern MIPA meeting was held in Gweru at Regency Hotel Fairmile on the 7th of June and the Northern MIPA meeting was held in Harare at Holiday Inn on the 9th of June 2022. Both meetings were well attended and very fruitful deliberations on how to improve the lives of people living with HIV were held. It is quite encouraging to note that the PLHIV sector has a safe space to deliberate on issues that affect the lives of people living with HIV especially with regards to access to treatment. MIPA meetings also enable the organisation to get information on what is happening at community level to make sure that community systems are strengthened for the benefit of the PLHIV sector. In his opening remarks, Dr Madzima the National Aids Council Chief Executive Officer stated that *“the sector should*



well attended and very fruitful deliberations on how to improve the lives of people living with HIV were held. It is quite encouraging to note that the PLHIV sector has a safe space to deliberate on issues that affect the lives of people living with HIV especially with regards to access to treatment. MIPA meetings also enable the organisation to get information on what is happening at community level to make sure that community systems are strengthened for the benefit of the PLHIV sector. In his opening remarks, Dr Madzima the National Aids Council Chief Executive Officer stated that *“the sector should*

always respect each other despite their origin or background and focus on issues that help to build strong membership that is able to advocate for improved HIV services in order to contribute meaningfully towards the 95 95 95 national HIV Strategic goals."

ZNNP+ made sure that stakeholders who contribute to eliminating some of the challenges that people living with HIV face were part of the MIPA meetings. The invited stakeholders included the Ministry of Health, PMTCT department, The Ministry of Health, Pharmacy Department, the Biomedical Research and Training Institute (BRTI), AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF). The Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) was also well represented at both meetings. All their presentations were very important in helping the MIPA Forum members to understand some of the important issues that affect the lives of people living with HIV such as the management of paediatric dolutegravir as well as the levels of ART medicines stocks that the country has. AHF and BRTI also shared very crucial researches that they conducted to help in coming up with proper HIV programmes in the country.



The Provincial presentations highlighted some of the challenges that people living with HIV are facing at community level that include lack of proper information management equipment as well as the challenge of long distances that some clients have to walk to get to their nearest health facilities in rural areas. Even though challenges were

presented, there are quite a number of opportunities for the PLHIV sector that were discussed about.

It was noted that ART supply is good in most districts with most facilities dispensing 3 months' and 6 months' supply of medicines to clients. It was also noted that there is general client satisfaction through good HIV service delivery in the country. The recently launched call for applications for the Social Contracting Grants for PLHIV Organizations is another opportunity that will help in addressing some of the challenges that people living with HIV face. This will also be a big step in improving and strengthening community systems. The presents of the Kutabila PLHIV Virtual Platform on toll free was also noted as a positive development but there is need to increase its usage by PLHIV. Participants were urged to encourage PLHIV to utilise the Kutabila platform to be linked to a medical doctor, mental health specialist and a Lawyer that have recently been recruited by ZNNP+ to help people living with HIV in diversity. Both the Southern and Northern MIPA forum members indicated that they are in full support of ZNNP+ and would do their best to make sure that the MIPA forum brings lasting solutions to the PLHIV sector in the country.

What were the recommendations and priorities agreed.

AHD

Pediatric HIV

CLM

How many people reached:

79 Mipa meetings held in Quarter 1 alone