

Forum: World Health Organization (WHO)

Issue: Combating Stigmatization of HIV/AIDS in Western and Southern Africa

Chair: Austin Tan

Introduction

Western and Southern Africa is the region most affected by HIV in the world and is home to the largest number of people living with HIV. HIV represents for human immunodeficiency virus, a virus that spread through certain body fluids that attacks the body's immune system to the point where the body can't fight off infections and disease. If not treated, it can lead to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome known as AIDS. A human being are unable to get rid of this virus entirely, even with treatment. Thus, once you acquire HIV, you have it for life. HIV-related stigma and discrimination refers to prejudice, negative attitudes, and abuse directed at people living with HIV and AIDS. Approximately one in eight people living with HIV gets rejected in health care settings and services due to stigma and discrimination. Furthermore, of the 5% of the globe's population, Western and Southern Africa is home to half the world's population. 7.1 million people living in these Africa regions are infected making Western and Southern Africa the largest HIV epidemic in the world. This World Health Organization committee strive to combat stigmatization of HIV and AIDS in Western and Southern Africa in order to eliminate this sense of unjust for the community and mankind.

Definition of Key Terms

World Health Organization (WHO)

The World Health Organization, otherwise referred to as the WHO, is an intergovernmental organization found on April 7, 1948, dedicated specifically to preserving the health of all people in the world. It is governed by the World Health Assembly and has commissioned multiple programs that aim towards eradicating the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Healthcare Systems

A complete system of all networks, organizations, and subsidiaries used to provide health care services to a specific geographical area.

HIV/AIDS

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. It is the virus that causes AIDS. AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. HIV can be transmitted through the blood, sexual fluids, or breast milk of an HIV-infected person. Being infected by HIV can weaken the immune system to the point that the system has difficulty fighting off certain infections.

Stigmatization

Individuals who feel ashamed, discriminated, or bullied against based off preconceived judgments of their disabilities, appearance, or lifestyle all apply to victims of stigmatization.

Discrimination

Discrimination is defined by treating an individual unfairly because of who they are or because they possess certain characteristics. For instance, one's gender, race, disability, religion, sexual orientation, etc.

General Overview

HIV/AIDS in Western and Southern Africa

South Africa has the biggest HIV epidemic in the world, with 7.1 million people living with HIV. Up to today, these region continue to be the center of HIV/AIDS epidemic, statistically 48% of the world's new HIV infections among adults, 55% among children, and 48% of AIDS-related deaths. HIV prevalence is high among the general population that reaches 18.9%.

The following nine countries and regions experience and suffer the most severe epidemics in the world. These regions include Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Stigmatization and Relevance with HIV/AIDS

The HIV/AIDS epidemic brought fear. Fear of what it was and what it could possibly do the community. This leads to a significant amount of stigma as the fear of the unknown causes the community to panic and began to neglect and discriminate individuals who acquire this disease.

UNAIDS and the World Health Organization (WHO) emphasize and highlight fear of stigma and discrimination as the main reason why people are reluctant to get tested, disclose their HIV status and take antiretroviral drugs (ARVs). The idea of unwillingness and shame to take an HIV test means that more individuals are diagnosed late and progressed into AIDS. This makes treatment less effective and makes the likelihood of transmitting HIV to others more likely.

Based on the 2002 South Africa National Survey, 26% of respondents reported that they would not be willing to share a meal with another who acquire HIV/AIDS, 18% were unwilling to be in the same room with another who acquire AIDS, and 6% wouldn't talk to another who acquire AIDS.

Problems with Stigma and Discrimination

Stigma and discrimination are major issues when people are acquired with HIV/AIDS and it can be categorized into Self Stigma, Community and Household Stigma, Healthcare Stigma, and Governmental Stigma.

Self-Stigma

Self-stigma is the mental wellbeing of people living with HIV/AIDS. The fear of discrimination breaks down the individual's confidence to seek help and medical care. In addition, the fear of a negative community reaction lead to negative self-judgment of shame, worthlessness and blame. Self-stigma therefore affected one's ability to live positively, adherence to treatment, and quality of life.

Community and Household Stigma

Community and household stigma are discrimination towards people living with HIV/AIDS through forcing them to leave and abandon their home and change their daily activities. This means, losing one's social place of belonging, but also because they could lose their shelter, their children, and their ability to survive. The isolation that social rejection brings can lead to low self-esteem and depression.

Healthcare Stigma

HIV/AIDS related stigma are discrimination that appears in healthcare systems in various countries. Many health providers may minimize contact with, or care of, patients living with HIV, delay or deny treatment, demand additional payment for services and isolate people living with HIV from other patients.

People from key affected populations may face additional discrimination in healthcare settings and feel violated with health care workers making judgments about one's HIV status, behavior, or sexual orientation, thus resulting individuals to be treated without respect or dignity.

Governmental Stigma

Governmental stigma is a country's discriminatory laws, rules and policies regarding to HIV which can cause alienation and excluding of individuals living with HIV. According to 2014, 64% of

countries reported to UNAIDS that there was some form of legislation in place to protect people living with HIV, however 72 countries still suffer from prosecution HIV-specific laws and range of offenses.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

World Health Organization

The main goals of World Health Organization on HIV/AIDS programming are to prevent the spread of HIV and STIs and further alleviate the impact of the dual HIV and AIDS in the society through:

1. Providing support to build capacity for voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) services for HIV/AIDS in the country.
2. Assisting in developing and updating manuals, guidelines and forms and organization of training programmes.
3. Providing support for equitable access to essential medicines for HIV/AIDS with rational use of quality drugs and strengthened diagnostic support for HIV/AIDS.

UNAIDS

UNAIDS is the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS to lead, strengthen, and support an expanded response to HIV and AIDS that includes preventing transmission of HIV. UNAIDS plans to reduce stigma through providing care and support to those already living with the virus, decrease the vulnerability of individuals and communities to HIV, and alleviating the impact of the epidemic. UNAIDS seeks to prevent the HIV/AIDS epidemic from turning into a widespread pandemic.

UNICEF

UNICEF stands for United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund and for the past two decades, UNICEF has been the leading voice for children in the global AIDS response, galvanizing commitment, resources, and action to address the impact of HIV on children. The organization has championed four priority areas to support and rescue HIV/AIDS along with stigma: Prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, HIV among adolescents and young people, pediatric HIV care and treatment, and protection care for children affected by HIV and AIDS.

South Africa

Through the increase in infection rates within South Africa, the knowledge of HIV/AIDS has not shown improvement in people changing their behavior towards this issue. Prevention campaigns have not taken account of the development of dynamics on the epidemic in South African society. Inequalities of girls and women, struggles to negotiate safe sex due to vulnerability to rape and partners. Moreover, the evidence that most South Africans do not know their HIV status and the perception of the diagnosis of HIV/AIDS contributed to a high extent of healthcare denial.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1987	First HIV drug, known as Retrovir (AZT) after six years of ignoring the disease. There was between 100,000 and 150,000 cases of HIV worldwide.
2000	The AIDS Denialist Movement gets international attention when South African president Thabo Mbeki declares nearly 20 million people have died from AIDS worldwide including nearly 17 million in sub-Saharan Africa.
2014	World Health Organization and the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) announces an ambitious plan to end the HIV pandemic by 2030

Relevant UN Resolutions and Treaties

- First international AIDS conference hosted by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the World Health Organization in Atlanta, Georgia, February 1985
- WHO launches the Global Programme on AIDS, October 1987

- UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) passes **Resolution 1994/24** endorsing the establishment of a Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, known as UNAIDS
- UN Security Council meets to discuss the impact of AIDS on peace and security in Africa, July 2000
- World leaders meet for the UN Millennium Summit and adopt the United Nations Millennium Declaration, September 2000 (**A/RES/55/2**)
- *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* is adopted by the General Assembly, September 2015
- General Assembly resolution (**A/RES/70/228**) summon a high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS, held on 8-10 June 2016

Possible Solutions

In the context of combating stigmatization of HIV/AIDS in Western and Southern Africa, it is exceptionally significant to address the issue of HIV/AIDS as well as resolve stigmatization of the individuals, since only addressing one facet of the issue simply cannot solve this issue entirely.

Uphold training programs for prevention and awareness. Training should be designed to educate employees about their rights and responsibilities, offering a link between the policy and day-to-day work activities, and the danger and consequences of HIV/AIDS. High levels of awareness, with the emphasis on ABC methodologies: Abstinence and using condoms are the first steps in preventing the spread of HIV and AIDS.

Organize voluntary counseling and testing (VCT). Once awareness has been spread, the community need to understand HIV status and interact with the HIV test. Organizations and companies should investigate options toward providing testing through an in-house counsellor or healthcare worker. In addition, partnering with local clinics or NGOs to facilitate voluntary counseling and testing.

Ensure care, treatment, and support is accessible. Access to treatment and care can be provided through medical aid schemes or in-house treatment programmes. This can take form from companies that provide discounted or free medication, fundraising campaigns with antiretroviral treatment, partnership with local government or NGOs.

Tackle the root causes of stigma and ensure services are inclusive and accessible. Establish a generalized and multidisciplinary approach, that revolves around the idea of protection, inclusion, empowerment, and education. Protect the individuals from anti-discrimination laws, decriminalization, and

challenging violence. Include all populations in health care services design and implementation along with stigma and discrimination reduction as a goal in national strategies. Empower the community to understand rights and how to act on violations. Educate people on how to address fears and how to change attitudes.

Optimize the use of specific programmes, campaign, and virtual community of practice to adopt a human rights approach to HIV and AIDS is in the public's interest. Stigma blocks access to HIV testing and treatment services, making onwards transmission more likely. The removal of barriers to these services is key to ending the global HIV epidemic. For instance, on March 2016, UNAIDS and WHO's Global Health Workforce Alliance launched the Agenda for Zero Discrimination in Healthcare. This works towards a world where everyone, everywhere, can receive the healthcare they need with no discrimination, in line with The UN Political Declaration on Ending AIDS.

Bibliography

- Barnhart, Gwendolyn. "The Stigma of HIV/AIDS." American Psychological Association, American Psychological Association, 2014, www.apa.org/pi/about/newsletter/2014/12/hiv-aids.aspx.
- Cdc. "What Are HIV and AIDS?" HIV.gov, 21 Feb. 2018, www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics/overview/about-hiv-and-aids/what-are-hiv-and-aids.
- "HIV and AIDS in West and Central Africa." AVERT, Avert, 24 Apr. 2017, www.avert.org/hiv-and-aids-west-and-central-africa.
- "HIV and AIDS." UNICEF, 2009, www.unicef.org/esaro/5482_HIV_AIDS.html.
- "HIV Stigma and Discrimination." AVERT, Avert, 9 Apr. 2018, www.avert.org/professionals/hiv-social-issues/stigma-discrimination.
- "HIV." American Sexual Health Association: Your Source For Sexual Health Information, www.ashasexualhealth.org/stdsstis/hiv/.
- "HIV/AIDS." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 27 Aug. 2018, www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/livingwithhiv/stigma-discrimination.html.
- Mandal, Ananya. "AIDS Stigma." News-Medical.net, News Medical, 23 Aug. 2018, www.news-medical.net/health/AIDS-Stigma.aspx.
- UNAIDSDate. "Global Statistics." HIV.gov, 10 Jan. 2019, www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics/overview/data-and-trends/global-statistics.

“What Is the Meaning of Stigmatization?” Reference, IAC Publishing, www.reference.com/world-view/meaning-stigmatization-7dcba0497f96c84d.