

IN THIS ISSUE

1. Intergenerational dialogue on Gender-Based Violence held in Burundi
2. UNERELA+ Europe launches in Uppsala, Sweden
3. Training of Female Religious Leaders on SGBV and HIV in Nigeria & Uganda
4. Training of Lutheran World Federation Staff Members, Religious & Cultural Leaders, Northern Uganda
5. Religious Leaders commit to end HIV and TB in Kenya
6. Men dialogues to increase uptake of HIV counselling and testing services by men in Kenya and South Africa
7. Review of constitution to address access to HIV treatment by LGBTI in Ghana
8. INERELA+ Religious Leaders retreat in Tanzania
9. INERELA+ learning forum in Tanzania
10. CONERELA+ awarded HOPE AWARD
11. Sierra Leone & South African networks involvement in commodity and ARV stock outs
12. Religious leaders lead in HIV testing in Kasungu District in Malawi

Intergenerational dialogue on Gender-Based Violence with Female Religious Leaders, women and Young Girls in Burundi, 24 - 25 May, 2017

BUNERELA+ (INERELA+ Burundi) held a dialogue on the 24th- 25th of May 2017 at the Star Hotel in Bujumbura. Twenty (20) participants attended the dialogue and were female religious leaders, representatives from the Ministry of Health and survivors of gender-based violence (GBV). Facilitators presented the Government of Burundi's

position on GBV based on the country's Constitution. During the training, survivors of GBV and rape



Participants after the Burundi dialogue

were given the

opportunity to share their personal experiences in a supportive environment. One of the survivors, a Muslim girl raped by her brother-in-law, shared her story four years after her rape ordeal took place. Sharing her story helped to highlight the fact that rather than remain in isolation and suffer silently, survivors need to quickly seek medical care and support. The dialogue enabled GBV survivors to freely mingle and share their experiences with other participants and also allowed the female religious leaders to understand the extent of these issues in their congregations and society.

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Launch of INERELA+ Europe in Uppsala, Sweden, 25 – 26 March, 2017

On 26 March, 2017, INERELA+ Europe was launched in Sweden by Reverend Paul Mokgethi-Heath following endorsement by INERELA+'s Executive Director, Reverend Phumzile Mabizela and the international Board. The launch of the network was combined with the SAVE training that started on 25th March and was attended by thirty people (30) participants drawn from various European countries. Reverend JP, from Church of Sweden was the main facilitator, supported by Reverend Jide of House of Rainbow. It was recommended that there was need for a larger pool of trainers in the region. Following the launch, an interim board was elected, consisting of: JP as Advisory Board Member; Mohamed Fara as Treasurer; Kristina Göranson as Secretary, and Paul Mokgethi-Heath as Regional Coordinator. Paul, Mohamed and Kristina were tasked to work out ways for strengthening the European network. INERELA+ Europe members are scheduled to meet again in October 2017.



Participants during the launch of INERELA+ Europe network

Training of Female Religious Leaders on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and HIV & AIDS in Nigeria and Uganda

INERELA+ Nigeria in collaboration with the INERELA+ Secretariat organised a three-day training for twenty-five (25) female religious leaders across Nigerian states on SGBV and HIV & AIDS on 20-22 June, 2017 at Gesse Hotel in Mabushi, Abuja. The training was also attended by representatives from Christian Aid, NACA, UNDP and UNAIDS. The training was aimed at building the capacity of female religious leaders to serve as champions against SGBV and HIV & AIDS. While addressing issues of FGM, Dr. Yinka the Gender and Human Rights focal person at the AIDS commission, suggested that the experiences narrated by participants should be documented and used during campaigns against FGM in Nigeria later in the year.

In July 17-20, 2017, INERELA+ Uganda held a similar training to



Participants at the SGBV and HIV training in Abuja, Nigeria

raise awareness of female religious leaders on SGBV as it relates to HIV. The training was held at Green Valley Hotel in Gaba, Kampala. The participants agreed it was time for the religious leaders to develop responses on elimination of GBV in their communities that were preventive and not curative.



Training of Lutheran World Federation (LWF) staff members, Religious Leaders and Cultural Leaders in Northern Uganda, 16 - 19 May 2017

The training of Lutheran World Federation (LWF) staff members, religious leaders and cultural leaders which took place in May was the last leg of the series of trainings which commenced in 2014. The training saw the participation of cultural leaders, traditional leaders and religious leaders mainly from the Pentecostal church, who were transformed from being overly critical personalities to those who advocate for the rights of PLHIV. Chief Alyoo Neko was dubbed the “hero of the day” because he was very active, leading sessions and he made an unusual request by asking that the religious leaders lead a Christian song in one of the local languages which says, “Abed a meda meda...” literally meaning this kind of information must be increased. From these trainings, the capacity of LWF staff has been built so that they can support community leaders on issues of HIV & AIDS, reproductive health and rights, sex and sexuality, gender empowerment and SGBV. However, despite significant progress made, challenges still remain, for instance, lack of transport to roll out the SAVE training in other districts.



Chief Neko leading the “Abed a meda” song

Religious Leaders commit to end paediatric HIV and TB in Kenya, 16 June 2017

Religious Leaders drawn from all faith communities in Kenya made a commitment to end paediatric HIV and TB in Kenya during the commemoration of the Day of the African Child in Nairobi on 16 June, 2017, under the theme: “It’s time to make the HIV virus powerless.” Religious

leaders vowed to take action and to use congregational platforms to reach community members in response to the global call of action entitled: “Act now for children and adolescents living with HIV,” articulated by the World Council of Churches’ Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance. The purpose of the event was to add local momentum to the global faith movement for action and change for children and adolescents living with HIV. Over 500 people mostly adolescents and young people were reached with HIV services. The activities

of the day included a procession through the streets of Nairobi where key religious leaders, adolescents and pupils from 6 Nairobi based schools participated. The campaign ended with a call to action to the government to act on funded national plans, early diagnosis, appropriate medicines, access to TB drugs, elimination of stigma, and food insecurity. For the full article visit:



Religious leaders & children during the campaign

<https://medium.com/@AIDSFree/the-african-child-stood-up-and-spoke-with-a-loud-voice-e167028ccd18>

Men dialogues to increasing the uptake of HIV Counselling and Testing Services by men in Kenya and South Africa

INERELA+ Kenya held two dialogue meetings at the Villa International Palace Hotel in Gem Sub County, Siaya and Hotel Twin Towers, Homa Bay County where 80 participants including religious leaders, cultural and community leaders, PLHIV, young people and representatives of Siaya and Homa bay County governments attended. The dialogue

discussed key issues that hinder uptake of HIV services among men in the community. The capacity of religious leaders, cultural and community leaders was also built so that they can act as drivers of change to influence more men to access and uptake HIV services. After the dialogue meetings, two committees were constituted to spearhead the recruitment of champions among the men in both counties. As part of the *“Live the promise Campaign by religious leaders”*, HIV testing services were offered in Homa bay County where 18 participants were tested.



Religious, cultural and community leaders during the panel discussion in Siaya County, Kenya

SANERELA+ (INERELA+ South Africa) with support from INERELA+ Secretariat and South Africa National Aids Commission, held a men’s dialogue on July 14, 2017, at Chiawello Community Hall Library in Soweto on the impact of masculinity on HIV prevention and GBV. A total of 305 people were in attendance. The purpose of the dialogue (was to discuss the high rise of Gender-based violence against women and children in South Africa and also ways to foster creative collaboration to increase uptake of HIV counselling and testing services by men. Minister of Women Honourable Minister Susan Shabangu urged people to come together in the face of HIV and GBV and she promised that she would table their request in Parliament, for an inclusive law that promotes more male involvement.



SA minister of women with INERELA+ ED at the Men’s dialogue in Soweto, Johannesburg

Review of the Constitution to address access of HIV treatment by LGBTI in Ghana, 03 May 2017

INERELA+ Ghana organised a one-day workshop on the Transformative Framework for LGBTI community on the 3rd of May, 2017. The Chief Superintendent, Jones Blantari, who is also the Programme Coordinator of Ghana Police AIDS Control Programme, called for a review of the Constitution to make it more explicit on the prosecution of LGBTI offenders. The meeting was attended by Men who have sex with Men (MSM), a clinical psychologist, Christian and Muslim Religious leaders, health workers, youth leaders and peer educators. Mr Blantari was concerned over the stance by churches and mosques describing homosexuality as a social and moral menace. Ms Acquah-Hayford noted INERELA+ Ghana has been a champion of the rights of key populations in a bid to eradicate all forms of HIV related stigma and discrimination and to increase their access to health services. The workshop ended with an appeal to other organisations to assist in identifying and referring members of the LGBTI communities for treatment.



Participants at the meeting pose for a group photo

Retreat of INERELA+ Religious Leaders in Tanzania, 09 August 2017

An international retreat of 21 Religious Leaders living with and affected by HIV was convened on 09 August, 2017 at Kunduchi Beach Hotel in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The objective of the retreat was for INERELA+ members to learn from the experiences and life journeys of each other – both as individuals and as people who have contributed to the birth, vision and growth of INERELA+ over the years. What stood out from these touching experiences – related with smiling reminiscence akin to tales of victory – is how the members stood firm amidst adversity, picking up themselves from what appeared to be very hopeless situations, recognising that there is life after HIV after all. Comparing antiretroviral drugs to “pregnancy pills”, one member proudly acclaimed that he takes these drugs so that he does not

become “pregnant” of AIDS, so that he can stay longer and healthy and lead a normal life like any other person. Working tirelessly and with limited resources towards formation of country networks, members acknowledged the support and encouragement of Reverend Gideon Byamugisha and Reverend J. P Mokgethi, from whom they drew a lot of inspiration. At the end of the retreat, members affirmed their commitment to live positively and be true to the cause of INERELA+.



Religious Leaders listening keenly during a session at the retreat in Tanzania.

INERELA+ Learning Forum held in Tanzania, 10 - 11 August, 2017

From the 10-11 August, 2017, an international learning forum was convened, which saw 50 INERELA+ members being joined by the Secretariat staff as well as national coordinators and finance staff from the country networks. While finance staff were being trained on financial management and compliance, the rest of the team, facilitated by an external consultant, participated in the visioning process, which saw INERELA+ adopt a new vision 2024: "INERELA+ has contributed to a world where there are no factors of social, economic, structural or legal nature that drive HIV related stigma, transmissions or deaths." This new vision means that INERELA+ will be working towards addressing all factors that fuel the spread of HIV and AIDS among communities. On



Participants at the learning forum displaying their HIV test results

the evening of August 10, 2017, members and staff were treated to a sumptuous dinner to commemorate INERELA+'s 15 years of progressive international growth. Participants took to their feet and danced themselves off after listening once more, to stories of inspiration told by those who have seen it all in terms of living with and/or being affected with HIV. During the learning forum, 42 members and staff of INERELA+ publicly took an HIV test arranged in-house to reinforce the importance of knowing ones' status and living responsibly.

CONERELA+ has been awarded a HOPE AWARD for their work of championing the rights of key populations

INERELA+ DRC commonly referred to as CONERELA+ has made an agreement to have a one-day seminar with House of Rainbow for religious leaders and the LGBTI community on sexuality, faith and human rights. The seminar is scheduled to take place in September 2017. The collaborative work to have a seminar was precipitated by the winning of the HOPE Award by CONERELA+ for their work in championing the rights of LGBTI and PLHIV. In the battle to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), stigma and discrimination remain key stumbling blocks. All in all, interconnectedness is the most cardinal strategy in the fight against stigma and discrimination associated with HIV and AIDS.

Involvement of Sierra Leone and South African networks in Commodity and ARV Stock outs

On the 28th of July, Stop Stock outs Project in South Africa trained thirty-eight (38) SANERELA+ members at the Fontainebleau Community Church in Randburg on how to report stock outs. The purpose of the training was to empower the members on their health rights and impact on medicines and drug stock outs. The training targeted religious leaders because of their influence in communities and thus act as advocates for medicine stock outs and encourage communities to be active citizens in the process. PLHIV should not default on their medication simply

because of drug stock outs, hence, the need to engage with government to ensure effective and efficient medical supply chain processes. Meanwhile, the Sierra Leone network was contracted by the Sierra Leone Development Agency (SLADA) to undertake a stock review on protected plus condoms. The stock review was carried out in the Bo, Makeni Counties and the Western area from 10 - 24 May, 2017.



Sierra Leone network team during a stock-out activity

Religious Leaders lead in HIV Testing in Traditional Authority Wimbe in Kasungu District of Malawi

Religious leaders have been oriented on how they can sensitize communities and congregants on the importance of knowing their HIV status by getting tested for HIV as a way of contributing to the 90; 90; 90 goals. MANERELA+ with support from Action Aid through Christian Aid organized an HIV testing week in Kasungu district in hard to reach areas where churches and mosques were targeted. During the HIV Testing week in July 2017, MANERELA+ used Religious Leaders and traditional leaders to mobilize their subjects to take part during the HIV testing week. In total 7356 people were tested during the week courtesy of Religious Leaders and traditional leaders who took a leading role in mobilizing people in their respective areas. This denotes that Religious Leaders are agents of change in our society hence equipping them with information on HIV & AIDS and health issues will help to reach many people.

INERELA+ in Pictures



Cutting of the cake to commemorate INERELA+ 15 year's anniversary



SA minister of women with INERELA+ ED at the Men's dialogue in Soweto, Johannesburg



Participants at the Learning Forum in Tanzania



Section of participants at the RL retreat, Tanzania

