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INERELA+ Kenya adopts door-to-door testing in informal settlements.



HIV counselling and testing in the informal settlements

The initiative began with champions disseminating messages and coordinating with the HTS providers for HIV testing services to be offered in the places of worship. With time, it was learnt that most of the people were uncomfortable with testing for HIV in public due to fear of stigma that accompanies an HIV positive test result. KENERELA+ took a different approach of door-to-door outreach which entailed champions from the respective sub-counties and HTS providers boldly marching into the communities to test people in high risk areas, such as local bars and brothels. Privacy and confidentiality was guaranteed as each client would be tested in person. Using this strategy, the Religious Leaders and counsellors noted an increased number of people being tested for HIV. KENERELA+ managed to offer testing services to those people who could not visit health facilities or showed up for testing in mass outreach programmes. All the positive HIV cases were immediately linked to a health facility for treatment. One of the leanings noted from the strategy is that it is better to escort the client to the facility of their choice for linkage to care and treatment as soon as they have been identified, as opposed to waiting for some time, since some clients tend to disappear never to be found. The role of the champions (Religious Leaders) in this entire process cannot be underpinned. Often times, reaching these target groups means that the champions must go deep into the informal settlements to avail HIV services.

INERELA+ Europe conducts a SAVE training in Irpin, Ukraine 23 – 25 July 2019.

From the 23rd -25th of July 2019, INERELA+ Europe conducts a SAVE training for representatives of religious organizations, Religious Leaders living with HIV and representatives of vulnerable groups in Irpin (Kyiv region) of Ukraine. The purpose of the training was to strengthen the role of religious organizations in combating the HIV / AIDS epidemic, stigma, and discrimination against key populations and to increase tolerance in society through the establishment of a constructive dialogue and partnership between representatives of NGOs, the state and religious sectors. The training was made possible with the support of INERELA+ and the Church of Sweden and financial support from the Secretariat of the National TB and HIV / AIDS Council within the framework of the UNDP project “Strengthening the National TB and HIV / AIDS Council of Ukraine” and CO “100% of Life”. The religious communities included representatives of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, the Roman Catholic Church in Ukraine, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, and the Protestant Churches, representatives of Regional Councils for Coordination of Response to Tuberculosis and HIV / AIDS. The SAVE training had positive effects for further collaboration to consolidate efforts to counteract HIV / AIDS. The questions and suggestions discussed during the workshop were used for in the Strategy of Churches and Religious Organizations of Ukraine in the field of public health and combating HIV / AIDS, which was developed in October 2019. Representatives of the seminar expressed a desire to translate the SAVE textbook into Ukrainian and adapt it to spread it in Ukraine and the region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. 5 priests (2 of whom are HIV positive) also expressed their desire to join INERELA+.



Participants posing for group photo following a SAVE training in Ukraine

INERELA+ inception meeting for Strengthening the Capacity of Religious Leaders to End Violence against Women and Girls (SCREVAW) project at Outlook Safaris Lodge, South Africa.

INERELA + convened an inception meeting for the three country networks that have been part of the funding application for UN Women Trust Fund from the 27-30 January 2020. The objectives of the meeting were to: develop a common understanding of the project, facilitate, and finalise the individual project's country networks implementation plans for 2020. Delegates from the three country networks namely, South Africa, Burundi and Ghana were welcomed by the Executive Director of INERELA+, Rev Mabizela who emphasised the importance of the project in the three countries in which the INERELA+ application has been approved for implementation. Rev Mabizela noted that GBV has been increasing in the Sub Saharan Africa and the project will intervene in that respect. The meeting agreed that the country networks should review the number of project implementation locations in close proximity (within the 100km radius) to one another that could give the maximum impact. It was also agreed that the stakeholder buy in meeting should serve as a project launch to highlight the importance and stature of the meeting to another level. The project proposal was presented to the three country networks giving the background of the theories of change of both the UN Trust Fund and INERELA+. The result framework of the project was presented, discussed and how this link to the theory of change. Detailed implementation plan was developed and completed by all three country networks ready for the signing off by the Secretariat. The monitoring and evaluation framework was presented together with the monitoring tool. The importance of this was that it looked into the expectations of the UN Trust Fund as the donor and the obligations of INERELA+. The meeting concluded with all the three-country network with a common understanding of the need and expectation of the project.



Participants posing for a photo at the UNTF SCREVAW inception meeting in Johannesburg



Country networks coordinators and officers during the 2020 Learning Forum at Weston Hotel in Nairobi

INERELA+ organized a 3-day learning forum for programme officers, finance officers and national coordinators from the 9th -11th of May 2020 at Weston Hotel in Nairobi. The Learning Forum was aimed at providing an opportunity for the network to review, reflect and learn different elements of its organizational and programming capabilities in the HIV and AIDS response. The meeting was attended by 12 INERELA+ country networks of Burundi, Ghana, DRC, Rwanda, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia, South Africa, Nigeria, Mozambique, Madagascar, and Botswana. INERELA+ Kenya hosted the event. As a learning event, the main process techniques for implementation was through the use of a mix of field based experiential and participatory adult learning techniques. These processes were undertaken over the three-day period.

The objectives of the learning forum were as follows:

- To reflect on the reviewed Strategic Plan 2020– 2024.
- To provide an opportunity for the network to review, reflect and learn different elements of its organizational and programming capabilities in the HIV and AIDS response and to train finance officers as well as to be capacitated on financial and Programmes components.
- To provide an opportunity to confront issues of mutual interest and concern between Country Networks and the Secretariat
- To establish a mechanism for fostering dialogue, collaboration between country networks.
- The Forum was meant to serve as an opportunity to share relevant aspects of their experiences with other countries, to debrief, share best or promising practices, tools, lessons learned and to plan future activities.

The workshop was designed to explore different implementation dynamics, results and good practices, embracing and learning from success and mistakes, planning together and linking all this knowledge to action. The learning forum was also designed to engage and orient the country networks that are implementing the UNFT project and the Hands-Off project. This platform gave the country networks the opportunity to learn from each other's experiences, exchange ideas on project implementation, monitoring evaluation and learning.

Launch of SANERELA+ UNTF SCREVAW project, Khotso House Chapel in Braamfontein, Johannesburg



Participants posing for a photo at the UNTF inception meeting for SANERELA+ in Johannesburg

The South African Network of Religious Leaders Living with or Personally Affected by HIV/AIDS (SANERELA+) held a UNTF stakeholders inception meeting to launch the SCREVAW project for South Africa on the 16th of March 2020. The meeting was meant to engage various stakeholders that will be taken on board when the project commences. Reverend Mabizela (the Executive Director of INERELA+) graced the meeting. Also in attendance was the Acting Director of the South African Council of Churches. Prof Dyasi who is the SANERELA+ Chairperson spoke of men standing back and allowing women to take the lead in his opening remarks. He emphasized more on them supporting not taking control of women spaces. Rev Mabizela who was the key note speaker spoke about the story of Vashti in the book of Esther chapter 2v 1-13. A consensus was reached that a WhatsApp group for different stakeholders who had pledged their commitment to this project should be created. The idea of creating safe spaces in communities was envisaged as a powerful tool that can be used in the religious spaces as a safe haven for the victims and survivors of violence. The COVID-19 pandemic made many people not to attend and only 46 people of the expected 60 attended the inception meeting.

Engaging out of School going adolescents girls age 20 -25 on family planning, HIV/AIDS and condom use.

Inerela+Sierra Leone in partnership with SLaDA identified twenty out of school going girls and engaged them in focus group discussion on family planning, HIV/AIDS and condom use. The focus group discussion was held in Bo county at the regional office of the National HIV/AIDS secretariat. The aim of the focus group discussion was to engage adolescent girls to assess their views on family planning methods, condom use, HIV and AIDS, teenage pregnancy and their right to family planning commodities. The focus group was led by Pastor Albert Freeman on the 20th February 2020. The focus group discussion started on family planning, then HIV/AIDS and condom use. Various questions were asked to ascertain the level of understanding of participants on family planning, HIV/AIDS, and condom use. Each participant briefly explained their understanding on family planning, HIV/AIDS and condom use. The discussion was concluded by further explaining the meaning of family planning to participants by Pastor Freeman. The discussion assisted participants to be bold to come up with issues affecting them on family planning and cleared the misconception and myths around HIV/AIDS and condom use. A lesson learnt was that most adolescents are dropping out of school due to inconsistencies in family planning which leads to teenage pregnancy.



Pastor Freeman leading a focus group discussion of adolescent girls

INERELA+ Zimbabwe Learning Exchange Visit to MANERELA+ in Malawi

The INERELA+ Secretariat supported INERELA+ Zimbabwe Learning Exchange visit to MANERELA+. INERELA+ Zimbabwe secretariat team, the Acting National Coordinator (Venancio Tavarwisa) and the Finance and Administration Officer (Mercy Masenyama) visited MANERELA from 11th -12th of May 2020 to learn from MANERELA+ how they are managing their systems, resource mobilisation and how they are implementing their activities. The visit sought to contribute towards the increase in knowledge on systems development, improvement in resource mobilisation and promoting positive living for those living with HIV in Zimbabwe. This was done through equipping INERELA+ Zimbabwe with knowledge and skills that promote good governance, increased strength in resource mobilization and project implementation. Learning process was undertaken on the 11th of May 2020. The 12th of May 2020 commenced with a field visit by two MANERELA+ staff members and INERELA+ Zimbabwe staff in Mitundu to Malawi Assemblies of God Mitundu

Holiness Temple. The exchange visit was effective in imparting knowledge on institutional systems development, better ways of engaging stakeholders and on resource mobilisation. The major learning visit activities included a field visit to the communities where MANERELA+ is working with Religious Leaders and congregants. The exchange visit to MANERELA+ was effective in enhancing INERELA+ Zimbabwe team's skills on revitalizing systems and putting INERELA+ Zimbabwe on the right track.



MANERELA+ and ZINERELA+ staff with beneficiaries during an exchange visit between Malawi and Zimbabwe in Lilongwe.

INERELA+ Kenya implements Wajibu Wetu Initiative.

Wajibu Wetu is a Swahili phrase meaning 'Our responsibility'. INERELA+ Kenya has been implementing a project known as the 'Wajibu Wetu' initiative, sub-granted under Afya Jijini, from December of 2018 to date. The project is set to run until end of June, 2020. The project focuses on three sub-counties within Nairobi County, namely Embakasi East, Embakasi West and Westlands. Nairobi county is considered one of the HIV high burden Counties in Kenya, with groups identified as not accessing HIV testing services including the Adolescents and Young People, paediatrics and the adult males (age 25+). The areas of focus in this project are to disseminate HIV-related messages with a particular focus on stigma reduction and availing HIV testing services to paediatrics, Adolescents and Young People (AYPs) and adult men. At the centre of this initiative has been the Religious Leaders, who were trained at the beginning of the project to be 'champions' of the good news. Through this training, these champions have disseminated key HIV messages to people from all walks of life, by taking advantage of congregation mobilized moments as well as community mobilizations. By end of June 2020, INERELA+ Kenya is expected to have reached 84,000 people with key HIV messages and through the champions, we have so far reached 61,935 people. The key messages focus on testing to know one's status, eliminating HIV related stigma, unpacking myths associated with HIV faith healing and access to care and treatment. The project success has largely been attributed to effective collaboration with the Religious Leaders, sub-county coordinators, community health volunteers, the Healthcare Service Providers (HTS) counsellors.



A Champion from Embakasi West in Nairobi disseminating HIV messages to community members in Carton area.

SCREVAW project implementing country networks' response to Gender-Based Violence during the COVID-19 context.

On the 26th of March 2020, the South African government imposed a nationwide lockdown to contain the transmission of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the containment measures had allowed a pandemic to thrive countrywide in the form of violence against women and girls. There has been alarming increase in violence against women and girls with 87 000 cases reported on the 3rd of April 2020. This coupled with suspended public transport and closures mean that survivors of violence are unable to access essential services, delaying access to justice and healthcare. Moreover, food shortages and confinement has increased the risk of violence, economic abuse, and starvation, especially for women and girls who are de-prioritized within economically vulnerable families. In response to this abnormality, SANERELA+ engaged Religious Leaders to act as champions to help women and children trapped in violence within Johannesburg suburbs. In line with the requirement of the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UNTF), SANERELA+ created a WhatsApp group, a Facebook page and posters on violence against women and girls as a move to contain gender-based violence. The online intervention is assisting Religious Leaders to keep in touch with events as they are happening on the ground and exchange information about gender based violence. The WhatsApp platform also serves to educate and share information about the COVID-19 and link each other up to relevant services and regulations set by the government to help flatten the curve of the disease. Information about gender-based violence is provided on the WhatsApp group as well as the role of church leaders in the fight against violence perpetrated on women and girls. So far, the Facebook page has so far reached 167 followers and is aiming to reach many more people who will be part of the conversation about the work that needs to be achieved. On a parallel note, INERELA+ Burundi collaborated with the Ministry of Solidarity, Social Affairs and Human Rights as a way of joining local and traditional Leaders for the stakeholders meeting which emphasised on the role of different stakeholders in the fight against violence against women and girls. The meeting was graced by the Bujumbura rural member of parliament and this gave BUNERELA+

the opportunity to work in that area which had no many activists for the fight against GBV. The meeting gathered community mediators and survivors and they had space to discuss and open up about the violences they experienced. Meanwhile INERELA+ Ghana held 2 radio talk shows to address VAW/G in a 2 local languages and distributed Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) materials for increase the knowledge and skills level of community members during the same period.

MANERELA+ trains 368 faith leaders on the SAVE methodology to implement voices against stigma in places of worship during the period of January to March 2020



Religious Leaders posing for group photo after the SAVE methodology training in Malawi

Malawi Network of Religious Leaders Living with or personally affected by HIV and AIDS (MANERELA+) with support from PEPFAR through the Christian Health Association of Malawi (CHAM) and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) is among the consortium members implementing a Faith and Community Initiative (FCI) aimed at “Strengthening the Delivery, Coordination and Monitoring of HIV Services in Malawi through Faith Based Institutions”. The initiative is being implemented in 5 PEPFAR priority districts of Blantyre, Thyolo, Chiradzulu, Zomba and Mzimba in collaboration with 4 partners which are the National AIDS Commission (NAC), Christian Health Association of Malawi (CHAM), Malawi Interfaith AIDS Association (MIAA), and Blantyre synod of the CCAP. In this project MANERELA+ is focusing on faith healing and stigma as well as linkage and retention to care which is under the objective “Decrease stigma and non-adherence related to faith healing”. The project is targeting Religious Leaders and their congregants (PLHIV) in all churches and mosques. In total 368 Religious Leaders have been trained on INERELA+ SAVE Model in order to implement voices against stigma in places of worship and surrounding communities in the 5 targeted districts. During the training Bishop Ephraim Disi (one of MANERELA+ long serving members) urged Religious Leaders to be symbols of hope by ending stigma in places of worship and surrounding communities. He encouraged Religious Leaders to go for HIV testing and be open about their HIV status to congregants because doing that will contribute to the reduction of stigma. On her part one of the participants Rev Jessie Masimo said the training has assisted her to acquire skills on ending stigma and urged her fellow clergy to use the skills to save lives of people living with HIV. “Fighting stigma will assist in reducing AIDS related deaths in our communities” she said.