

Making Human Rights Count! for PLHIV in Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia



Authors: R. Mwaniki¹, P. Nweke², K. Sikwese³, M. Nyambe⁴

Background:

Throughout the history of HIV, people living with HIV have experienced and witnessed many violations of their human rights. Stigma fed discrimination, and human right violations against People living with HIV continue to this day. The murder of Steve Harvey, an AIDS activist in Jamaica, just before World AIDS day 2005, because of his sexuality and HIV positive status inspired the conception of Human Rights Count!.

Human Rights Count! aims to document HIV-related human rights violations perpetrated against people living with HIV (PLHIV) with the aim of devising long-term solutions to these violations.

Issues:

Human rights violations increase the risk of HIV infection and have a negative impact on prevention efforts and the accessibility and effectiveness of treatment, care and support. Information from different parts of the world, suggests that human rights violations increase, following HIV infection. Left unchallenged, HIV-related human rights violations will have a negative impact on achieving Millennium Development Goal 6, as well as other national and international development goals.

GNP+ developed a concept for networks of PLHIV to lead the process of systematically documenting HIV-related human rights violations. A questionnaire to aid documentation was developed after wide consultations. In 2009, the programme was piloted in Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia by networks of people living with HIV working in partnership with human rights organisations.

Implementing partnerships: (Global and National)

Partnerships between networks of PLHIV and human rights / legal organisations or advocates have been integrated into the programme implementation. Human rights organisations and advocates provide immediate support to people who report violations. Furthermore they are instrumental in ensuring that the evidence collected in this programme informs action plans for advocacy that will ultimately result in the decrease in the number of human rights violations against people living with HIV.

NATIONAL NETWORKS OF PLHIV IN KENYA, NIGERIA AND ZAMBIA

Human Rights Training Programme (Global and National)

Training on human rights has been included as an integral part of Human Rights Count! In partnership with the AIDS & Rights Alliance for Southern Africa (ARASA), a training programme which can be modified to suit different settings has been developed. The aim of the training is to give the implementers of the programme a good understanding of human rights and HIV and a clear guide on how to document human rights violations against people living with HIV through the implementation of the Human Rights Count! The training will enhance human rights understanding amongst people living with HIV within the country.

Indicative Findings from Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia:

Over a 3 month period, 53 violations were documented in Kenya, 42 in Nigeria and 29 in Zambia. From all three countries, the most common violation related to the right to work, with work being terminated or denied owing to HIV positive status.

In all three countries, more than 60% of the people whose rights were violated did not report the violations to the authorities;

In most cases:

- People living with HIV have their rights violated because of their HIV positive status;
- People living with HIV are not aware of their rights or not asserting their rights;
- People living with HIV are not seeking redress or justice for the violations of their rights;
- People living with HIV are not reporting violations to the appropriate authorities.

Next steps:

- » Following the pilot, documentation has been extended to countries in Africa, in the Asia-Pacific region and North America.
- » The national networks will work with GNP+ to create tools that support PLHIV in accessing justice and increase human rights and legal literacy.
- » National implementation will be extended to create better links between the documentation and advocacy through mainstreaming of HIV issues into the work of international human rights organisations.

Implementing partners:

1-National Empowerment Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS in Kenya (NEPHAK), Nairobi, Kenya; 2-Network of People Living with HIV and AIDS in Nigeria (NEPWHAN), Abuja, Nigeria; 3-Network of Zambian People Living with HIV (NZP+), Lusaka, Zambia; 4-Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+), Amsterdam, Netherlands; Leadership Through Accountability Programme World AIDS Campaign (WAC), Cape Town, South Africa

Funded by UKaid from the Department for International Development Governance and Transparency Fund (GTF)

