

ZNNP+ Executive Director closing speech UN Multi stakeholder hearing on HIV and AIDS

- Distinguished President of the General Assembly,
- Distinguished Chairs of the HLM on HIV & AIDS
- Representatives of Member States, UNAIDS leadership,
- Fellow People living with HIV leaders,
- Communities, Civil society and partners,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to speak on behalf of millions of people living with HIV whose voices must remain central as we shape the future of the HIV response beyond 2026.

I stand here today carrying not only the experiences of Zimbabwe, but also the resilience, courage, and determination of People living with HIV communities who have sustained the HIV response for decades despite the burden of the disease and often in the face of Stigma, discrimination, and limited resources.

This hearing has reminded us that the world stands at a defining moment.

The commitments made in the 2021 Political Declaration gave hope that we could finally end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030. Yet today, we confront a changing and fragile global environment characterized by declining donor funding, shifting geopolitical priorities, widening inequalities, and growing pressure on already overstretched health systems.

In most countries, these disruptions are not abstract policy discussions. They are realities affecting people's daily lives.

They affect whether a person living with HIV in hard-to-reach areas can continue receiving uninterrupted treatment.

They affect whether a young woman in rural areas can access HIV prevention services without fear of stigma.

They affect whether community-led organizations can keep their doors open to provide counselling, adherence support, psychosocial services, and human rights advocacy.

My country Zimbabwe has made important progress in the HIV response. The country achieved the 95, 95, 95 targets ahead of schedule. Through strong partnerships between government, communities, development partners, and civil society, we have significantly expanded access to antiretroviral therapy, reduced AIDS-related deaths, and strengthened community systems.

The success of AIDS response will depend on our ability to work together. The Partnerships between the government, affected communities and development partners are the only way to protect our progress and sharpen our response to support those most at risk, such as children, young people and people in informal settlements.

Furthermore, we must remember that to ensure a safe and dignified HIV response, we must dismantle the stigma and discrimination embedded in our clinics, workplaces, and laws, recognizing that community leadership is the only way to bridge the gap between policy and people, as the communities act as first responders, service providers, and innovators rather than just passive beneficiaries.

In Many countries people living with HIV already provide critical peer support, reaching the hard to reach and working with health care facilities, yet they struggle to survive on limited and unreliable funding. As international aid declines, countries must ensure the work of communities is institutionalized protected and funded.

We therefore call for:

First, sustained and predictable financing for HIV responses, particularly for community-led organizations and frontline services.

Second, measured integration of HIV services into broader primary healthcare systems while ensuring that integration takes into consideration people living with HIV Minimum Requirements for Integrated HIV Services

Third, investment in community-led data and monitoring systems that allow real-time accountability and help us identify who is being left behind.

Fourth, the removal of structural and legal barriers that continue to fuel vulnerability, stigma, and exclusion.

And fifth, fully implement the GIPA principle and institutionalize people living with HIV leadership in governance, policymaking, implementation, and accountability mechanisms at every level.

Distinguished delegates,

The future of the HIV response depends on political courage.

The decisions made in the lead-up to the 2026 High-Level Meeting will determine whether the world accelerates progress toward ending AIDS or whether we witness a reversal of decades of hard-won gains.

History has taught us one important lesson:

The response is only effective with the Great involvement of people living with HIV in all aspect of the response

When people living with HIV lead, progress follows.

When people living with rights are protected, their health outcomes improve and the country's economy rises.

And when solidarity guides global action, lives are saved.

As we move toward the High-Level Meeting in June, let us ensure that the voices of people living with HIV remain at the center of every decision that affects our lives.

From Zimbabwe to the global stage, our message is clear:

Ending AIDS by 2030 is still possible but only if we act with urgency, solidarity, accountability and the great involvement of people living with HIV

I thank you.