

REPORT ON STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION WORKSHOP

Bunia - DRC

From 31st March to 4th April 2014



A group Photo of Participants and Facilitators

Report by Christine B. Baralemwa, Pascal Ngona and Michael Talemwa

1. Background to the Workshop and Aim of Workshop

With the support of DMCDD, PACANet (Pan African Christian AIDS Network) in collaboration with the DRC Task Force Committee organized and conducted the Stigma and Discrimination Workshop for Church Leaders in DRC from 31st March to 4th April in Bunia.

At the Call to Action Conference which took place in Bunia from 11th – 12th February 2014, the Church Leaders present requested PACANet to conduct a Workshop to sensitize and train Church Leaders in DRC to acquire the necessary knowledge and positive attitudes for the response and improved actions against Stigma and Discrimination related to HIV and AIDS within and out of the Church.

2. Participant Representation

The Stigma and Discrimination workshop was attended by 29 participants from 5 regions of Ituri District and one female participant from Uganda. These included Aru, Mahagi, Mambasa, Djugu and Bunia. (See Appendix 1: List of Participants)

The Stigma and Discrimination workshop was conducted over a period of 5 days beginning 31st March and ending 4th April, 2014.

❖ Participants Expectations

- To know more about HIV and AIDS
- To learn about PACANet
- To know how to live with people living with HIV
- To acquire skills on how to start talking about HIV
- To know how to fight fears related to HIV and AIDS
- To get knowledge on the rights of PLWHA
- To build my capacity in responding to HIV and AIDS
- To reinforce knowledge on how to care for people living with HIV

3. Facilitators and Teaching Materials

The Workshop was facilitated by Christine Caroline B. Baralemwa (Trainer and PACANet Resource Person) and Pascal Ngona (Trainer and PACANet Resource Person) and Michael Talemwa (Trainer and PACANet Resource Person). One topic (The Situation of HIV and AIDS in DRC) was presented to participants by Dr. Jean Dirokpa on behalf of the Ituri Health Area office. The Workshop materials were mostly extracted from the PACANet Stigma and Discrimination Manual.

4. Specific Objectives of Stigma and Discrimination Workshop.

- 1) To give an overview on current situation of HIV and AIDS and on factors fuelling the spread of HIV in DRC.
- 2) To identify prejudices and fears related to HIV and AIDS and explain how these attitudes can negatively impact interactions with PLWHA, people affected by HIV and also with perceived as HIV positive.
- 3) To explain how HIV is transmitted.
- 4) To describe standard precautions for HIV prevention within the Church or during Home based care.
- 5) To discuss forms, causes and effects of Stigma and Discrimination.
- 6) To explain links between Stigma and Discrimination within the Church and at Community level at large.
- 7) To develop a positive perspective to support PLWHA or people perceived to be HIV positive.
- 8) To identify the Rights of PLWHA [and promise to share and engage to respect them]
- 9) To develop Action Plans individual and specific for the Church to fight against Stigma and Discrimination.

5. Training Methodology

The Workshop comprised of Interactive Lecture Presentations, Group Based Discussions followed by Plenary Sessions, Short Lecture and Discussions, Brainstorming, Case Analysis, Games and Jokes, Singing to praise God, Testimonies and Sharing of Real Life Experiences. All days started by morning devotions. *(Picture: Mrs. Jeannette leading Devotions)*



Christine and Michael made their presentations in English and Pascal made his in French. All presentations needed interpretation since there were both English and French speaking participants.

6. Indicative Content

The following content was covered during the course

1. Presentation on PACANet
2. The Situation of HIV and AIDS in DRC
3. Factors that enhance the spread of HIV in DRC
4. Forms, causes and effects of HIV related stigma in DRC
5. Exploring specific features of HIV that lead to Stigma and Discrimination
6. Exploring our thoughts, beliefs, and practices about HIV and AIDS
7. What is HIV related Discrimination?
8. Our experiences as 'stigmatizer' or 'stigmatized'; Real life examples of HIV related discrimination
9. Addressing HIV related stigma and Discrimination at different levels
10. How has the church fuelled HIV and AIDS related stigma in DRC?
11. Church Interventions to address HIV related Stigma and discriminations
12. Integrating Anti stigma and discrimination into church programs ; Action Plans
(for each represented congregation)

7. Workshop Evaluation

Evaluation of the training was done by the participants and the facilitators through daily evaluation; end of course evaluation, and the pre- and post-course assessment.

Generally the course was seen by the participants as covering very useful information. Participants assessed that the subjects were informative and the sessions were interesting, fruitful and enjoyable. They reported that they were gaining a lot of knowledge preparing them to meet the challenges that they have been facing over time in responding to Stigma and Discrimination related to HIV and AIDS. The participants also recommended the simplicity of the training approaches and methods that made it easy for them to grasp the content more easily. The training materials were seen as comprehensive, delivered using participatory teaching methods and venue was adequate. The training was judged a great success by both facilitators and trainees with both sides contributing to a very useful exchange of information. There was evident change in knowledge levels from when the participants came. This was evident through the regular oral class quizzes, participant questions and trend of discussions, the pre and post- training tests.



Rev. Mugarwa sharing personal experiences

The following areas were specifically commented on daily;

Content of the training:

Complete and detailed, interesting, comprehensible, theory combined with practice, very useful for Church Leaders in the response to HIV and AIDS related Stigma and Discrimination.

Logistics:

The participants rated the venue, accommodation and feeding as very good.

Time and Program:

Well planned though sometimes the interpretation consumed some of the time.

Interpreter:

Quite good, he had knowledge on almost all the generally spoken areas in the region, and had the added skill of guitar playing throughout the training.

8. Observations

There was a good gender balance with 16 females and 13 males representation at the training. Many of them are in their youthful years and some reported they were already having some forms of HIV and AIDS interventions in their Churches though not specifically addressing HIV and AIDS related Stigma and Discrimination.

Despite the above, a few of the participants did not have adequate scientific knowledge on HIV and AIDS, and expressed beliefs that could pose a big challenge to the efforts against HIV and AIDS.

Participants expressed the zeal to go back and initiate HIV and AIDS interventions specifically addressing stigma and discrimination among their churches and communities. Through the topic of “Our experiences as Stigmatizer and Stigmatized” many of the participants confessed to have stigmatized PLWHAs sometimes unknowingly and they were willing and ready to correct this once they went back. Participants expressed their gratitude to PACANet via the Facilitators for building their capacities in the fight against HIV and AIDS related Stigma and Discrimination (see the picture).

Dividing the class into groups facilitated bonding and team spirit, and also made the division of work easier, as each group vigilantly took on the responsibilities of their respective days. These groups also facilitated individual participation especially during the plenary sessions.

9. Challenges

A few of the participants knew very little about the basic scientific facts about HIV and AIDS, and because of this, more time had to be created to focus a little more than planned on the scientific topics about HIV and AIDS.

Given the short period of training The participants indicated the potential challenge to the implementation of their planned activities due to limited resources but were encouraged to utilize low or no cost intervention strategies within their current church activities. The participants were also assisted to appreciate the importance of the human resource before others like funds.

The training attracted the attention of many other leaders from the communities especially since the training was publicized in the local media. Many of them requested for an opportunity to receive the training from PACANet but we did not have immediate answers for them.

10. Recommendations

Allocation of Training time and selection of Participants:

A little more time needs to be allocated to the Stigma and Discrimination training if participants are to be better prepared for their role in the fight against stigma and discrimination in their communities.

If the training period can not be adjusted to accommodate more time, then preferably participants selected for the training should have prior adequate/basic scientific knowledge about HIV and AIDS, to be able to grasp the logic behind the fight against HIV.

Participant follow- up: Close follow up of participant action plans be effected to not only to keep the observed vigilance alive, but also to support participants in the endeavors to improve and strengthen church response to Stigma and Discrimination. This could among others include physical field visits to offer farther support to those who actually initiate programs in their Churches and communities after the training.

Training materials: PACANet’s Training materials for Stigma and Discrimination are not yet very well completed. Having quality presentations required a lot of work from the facilitators. PACANet should find ways of completing the Training Materials.

11. Conclusions:

Though the training was successfully completed, the period of 5 days for the stigma and discrimination training is short compared to the magnitude of topics that need to be covered. We observed that the training sessions were very necessary and have emphasized the need for the training in basic skills to church leaders for a more well informed and comprehensive response to HIV and AIDS and to HIV and AIDS related Stigma and Discrimination.

Participants worked on individual actions plans, detailing how they were going to put into practice the knowledge and skills acquired. The importance of the need to strengthen collaboration among the church was emphasized in training and acknowledged by the participants.



The training was officially opened and closed by Dr. Lonema Vageru, the Head of Health Office for the entire Ituri District. He thanked PACANet for the achievement especially for building the capacity of Church leaders and involving them in fight against HIV related stigma and discrimination and in the response to HIV and AIDS.