

SUPPORT GROUP REVITALISATION

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BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

There was a call from the KZN People Living with HIV (PLHIV) Sector during PLHIV Summit in 2020 and in 2021 during the meeting with the World AIDS Day (WAD), where a resolution was taken to revive and re-establish support groups in order to deal with issues surrounding loss to follow up and increase adherence, psycho-social support and undetected viral loads.

In response to the call the KZN office of the Premier advertised the request for proposal number RQ2021/09/1323 and the organization led by the PLHIV sector (Lubanzi Ulwazi Resource Centre) was appointed to revitalize the support groups in 6 district which are eThekweni split into North and South, iLembe, uGu, Harry Gwala and uMgungundlovu).

The model was necessary to provide a framework for enhancing positive behavioral outcomes of PLHIV. These behavioral outcomes include reduced HIV-related stigma; positive HIV-status disclosure; reduced sexual risk behaviors; and improved adherence to anti-retroviral therapy (ART).

PROJECT TASKS

- Assess and document current status of Adherence Clubs and added value of re-establishing Support Groups in relation to adherence to ART
- Engage PLHIV in discussions to determine how Support Groups will be expected to function including implementation processes
- Assess the overall extent to which Support Groups will contribute to the Provincial Implementation Plan (PIP)
- Assess the role of civil society sectors in the implementation of support groups.
- Engage key stakeholders and development partners in discussions to support the establishment of Support Groups.
- Assess and develop the governance, coordination, and management structure of support groups including policy guidelines and SOPs- this should be in a form of KZN Support Groups Booklet, a designed copy to be produced by Service Provider and to be printed by Office of the Premier

BASELINE SURVEY

- ❖ **Assess and document challenges that contributed to the demise of support in 6 districts**

Interviews were conducted in all districts to assess the challenges that contributed to the demise of the support groups and findings were documented. The following are the findings:

1. DSD funded organization's challenges for the demise of support groups were:

- Lack of funding
- Covid 19
- Lack of activities for the support groups.

2. Lack of Funding

3. Lack of Resources

4. Lack of Refreshments during meeting

5. No activities for the support groups

6. Adherence Clubs vs Support Groups

7. Lack of information

8. Support Groups were convened by NPOs and sometimes their interest was not HIV per say.



DISTRICTS ALLOCATIONS

District	Local Municipality	No of support groups	No of support groups revitalized	Institution linked with
eThekwini	2	30	52	DoH Health Facilities DSD HCBC HST TBHIV CARE
uGu	4	12	13	DoH Health Facilities DSD HCBC Lifeline
uMgungundlovu	7	13	7	DSD HCBC DOH Health Facilities
Harry Gwala	3	7	7	DSD HCBC, Match, DOH,
Ilembe	4	11	8	DSD HCBC
TOTAL	20	73	87	

STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGEMENT

❖ Assess the role of civil society sectors in the implementation of support groups

Civil Society sectors plays a vital role in the implementation of the support groups by ensuring that members do adhere to treatment, treatment literacy, encouraging and promoting the 95-95-95 in order to reach zero new infections by 2030 and also in reaching the U=U.

❖ Engage key stakeholders and development partners in discussions to support the establishment and sustainability of Support Groups.

Consultations took place in each district, consultations were two days per district to engage and discuss the support of the re-establishment and sustainability of support groups.

Government Departments and development partners fully participated, firstly by sharing their services rendered and secondly by committing to supporting the support groups where and when is needed. (DOH, DSD, EDTEA, Sports, Arts and Culture, DOE, Agriculture, TB/HIV Care, Match, HST, AFSA, IAPAC, CINDI Network, Broadreach Healthcare, DSD funded organizations and the Civil Society Forum)

❖ Assess and develop the governance, coordination, and management structure of support groups.

Project was introduced to the District AIDS Councils (eThekweni, Harry Gwala, Ilembe, uGu and at Gender Based Violence Forum meeting (uMgungundlovu) and also to the People Living with HIV Secretariat, in order to develop the governance, coordination and management of support groups.



Challenges

- Patients giving wrong addresses and changing names when they visit health facilities. There is a **high rate of defaulters**, this is seen through viral load monitoring and loss to follow up.
- There is a **lack of resources** that is why we are not able to do treatment literacy at facilities.
- **Staff attitude** towards PLHIV and stigma by healthcare workers.
- There is **lack of Support** from other stakeholders.
- Youth is not interested to partake in some activities even to join the support groups and disclosure.
- There is still a lot of Stigma especially **internal stigma** which is far more dangerous than any other form of stigma.
- **Adherence clubs vs support groups**. Adherence clubs exclude newly diagnosed clients and those that are struggling to adhere to treatment. They also lack psycho-social support.

Remedial

- **Traditional health practitioners** should be educated on treatment literacy and prevention.
- **Social media** should be utilized because they play a huge role in promoting stigma and discrimination.
- The selection of **AYFS Champions** who can understand youth language, style and behaviour
- **Integration** of services by Department of Health



Successes

Number of support groups revitalised and linked with the healthcare facilities and other partner organizations per district:

eThekwini District Municipality – 52

iLembe District Municipality – 7 and 12 DSD HCBC were willing to start the support groups

uGu District Municipality – 13

uMgungundlovu – 7

Harry Gwala – 7

In total – 86



INK
CLHIV

Highlights

Harry Gwala and uGu Districts most departments were present including partners and District coordinators.

eThekwini Metro attendance exceeded expectations as most DOH clinic managers were present as well as HCBCs and partners. EDTEA was also present.

Presence of DOH and DSD especially DSD in all Districts. eThekwini District municipality has more than 52 support groups.

After the consultation, the department of Sports Arts and Culture gave away 2 sets of soccer balls and soccer gear to two soccer clubs in Harry Gwala.

TB HIV Care with the office of the eThekwini and the KZN Office of the Premier handed tables, gazebos, white boards, books and toys to Inanda and surrounding support groups.

INK CLHIV clustered launched Support Groups on the 3rd of December 2022, where over 750 children living with HIV attended and graced by the presence of the KZN Health HOD and both offices of the eThekwini and KZN Province.

Furnished Positive Lounge at Ward 54 donated by TBHIV Care and resources for 4 support groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Integration of services between Civil Society, Developmental Partners and Government Departments
- ❖ Capacity Building and skills development for support group members
- ❖ Support Group facilitators should be capacitated to engage during cluster Nerve Centre meetings.
- ❖ Building and strengthening of the working relationship between Government and PLHIV Sector.
- ❖ Treatment literacy should be done at all levels
- ❖ Traditional Healers should be educated on treatment literacy and prevention.
- ❖ Social media should be utilized because they play a huge role in promoting stigma and discrimination.
- ❖ The selection of AYFS Champions who can understand youth language, style and behavior

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

GOVERNMENTS DEPARTMENTS

- ❖ KZN Office of the Premier
- ❖ District AIDS Councils (Harry Gwala, eThekweni, ILembe and uMgungundlovu)
- ❖ Department of Social Development
- ❖ Department of Health
- ❖ Departments of Agriculture
- ❖ Department of Education
- ❖ Department of Sports Arts and Culture
- ❖ Department of Economic Development

PARTNER ORGANIZATION

- ❖ Aids Foundation for South Africa
- ❖ Match
- ❖ Broadreach Healthcare
- ❖ Health Systems Trust
- ❖ TB/HIV Care
- ❖ IAPAC Fast Track Cities
- ❖ Lifeline –Ugu



CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM: Provincial and District CSF ,
Provincial and District PLHIV and Youth Sector