



WORLD AIDS DAY 2019 STATEMENT

COMMUNITIES MAKING THE DIFFERENCE TOWARDS UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

On the occasion of World AIDS Day 2019, NEPHAK gladly joins the Ministry of Health and partners with renewed commitment to putting communities at the centre to accelerate the delivery of the fast track targets and end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030 in line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. This means that communities are a critical pillar to scale up universal health coverage.

The World AIDS Day 2019 theme of ‘Communities Make the Difference’ means that Communities, comprising people living with, at risk of and affected with HIV and AIDS, including mentor mothers, peer educators, counsellors, community health workers, door-to-door service providers, civil society organizations and grass-roots activists, are leading and campaigning to ensure that the AIDS response remains relevant and are making an invaluable contribution to the AIDS response. Communities lead and support the delivery of HIV services, defend human rights, support their peers. Communities are the lifeblood of an effective AIDS response and an important pillar of support. Communities of people living with and affected by HIV, along with

Communities are making the difference and are key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, but far too often are lacking the resources and recognition they deserve and need. As we approach 2020 which was agreed as the date for delivering the fast track targets, the role of community-led organizations is more important than ever. To recognize the role played by communities and community-led organizations, NEPHAK and its partners are highlighting the role of communities this World AIDS Day. At a time when reduced funding is putting the sustainability of HIV services in jeopardy, community activism is vital. A greater mobilization of communities is urgently needed and the barriers that stop communities from delivering services need to be overcome. Today more than ever communities are needed to ensure that HIV remains on the political agenda, that human rights are respected, protected and fulfilled, and that decision-makers and implementers are held accountable. We at NEPHAK fully agree with the UNAIDS report, [communities need your support](#)

Communities are helping people to claim their rights and access stigma-free health and social services. Communities are also the best way to reach people living with and affected by HIV. This The World AIDS Day 2019 also comes at a time when there are discussions to scale up the implementation of universal health coverage (UHC). Only through HIV – sensitive universal health coverage can the AIDS related deaths be brought to a halt. This is because they have trust with the people they serve, and community-led organizations are the most effective way of reaching people living with HIV and key populations. Communities are on the fore-front of acting to change laws that discriminate. They have successfully campaigned to decriminalize HIV transmission, exposure

and non-disclosure, same-sex relationships, transgender people and prisoners- to access HIV and TB health services and to be fully included in the UHC.

Our World AIDS Day call!

Communities are delivering incredibly important services and support to contribute to the response to HIV and achievement of universal health coverage. Therefore, we are urged to:

- Recognition of social participation and inclusion of communities as a key pillar of the HIV response and roll-out of universal health coverage.
- Increased investment in communities as currently they are not adequately funded, with resources for community-led organizations shrinking and domestic funding mechanisms often inadequate.
- Resource Community Health Workers (CHVs) and ensure that people who work as community settings are adequately planned for and compensated as this is a valuable investment, helping to keep volunteers engaged and continuing with their valuable work.
- Lead by example from the highest levels of governments, politicians must lead efforts to reduce stigma and discrimination against people living with and affected by HIV.
- Commit to meaningful engagement of communities of people living with and affected by HIV in health decision making bodies- for example, UHC planning, budgeting and implementation.
- Make community data count as they are often best placed to report on the realities of service delivery and use.

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