



PRESS RELEASE

ADVOCACY WORKSHOP & REPORT LAUNCHING OF BASE LINE ASSESSMENT OF INTEGRATED HIV TREATMENT SERVICES IN KPK PROVINCE



Introduction: The Association of People Living with HIV [APLHIV]-Pakistan, is a National Network of HIV Community & Associated Key Populations. The APLHIV provides an effective and vibrant venue to a wide range of National and International organizations with diverse goals to get together to exchange and share HIV related resources and to engage in partnerships to enhance the quality, coverage and impact of their efforts to combat HIV epidemic and address the issues associated with HIV & AIDS. The APLHIV is also the only available bridge between these communities and the government. Advocacy, Monitoring, Research & Evaluation, Independence & Empowerment and System Strengthening are the strategic directions of the APLHIV.

In line with its strategic directions the APLHIV has travelled a long way to facilitate and empower the HIV Community and Associated Key Populations in order to improve their quality of life. In recent past the APLHIV has emerged as a strong national level Research agency due to its efforts to generate and provide evidence to the policy and decision makers to address the needs of these communities. These evidence generating researches have provided gross root information to the stakeholders.

The APLHIV commenced its major activities for year 2017 with a two [2] days National level gathering in Islamabad from 23rd -24th Jan 2017. The activities included launching of report on Base Line Assessment Of Integrated HIV Treatment Services In KPK, Advocacy On Introduction and Expansion of OST Services, Advocacy On Decentralization of HIV Treatment Services, Advocacy For Inclusion Of YKP In Provincial & National AIDS Strategies, Sensitization Of Stakeholders On SRH&R Needs of Positive Females, launching of a Report on State Of Human Rights Of PWIDs and Launching of “ Community Empowerment Cell”.

The meeting was attended by top leadership of NACP, PACPs, UN System, Community Activists, Advocates & Representatives of Semi Independent Networks.

LAUNCHING OF REPORT OF BASE LINE ASSESSMENT OF INTEGRATED HIV TREATMENT SERVICES IN KPK PROVINCE

Recently the KPK government unrolled an integrated approach for provision of HIV treatment along with Hepatitis and Thalassemia. In order to provide a baseline data the APLHIV conducted a Base line Assessment of existing HIV treatment services availability, accessibility, utilization and quality in order to explore opportunities and constraints for the expansion of services. The APLHIV also remained interested in exploring the impact of these services in terms of improving the quality of life of the PLHIV in KPK Province. The key findings of this assessment were disseminated in a National Level gathering organized by the APLHIV in Islamabad. The gathering was attended by all Provincial AIDS Control Programs, National AIDS Control Program, UN partners, Community members, Advocates, activists and representatives of Drug User’s Network [DUNE], Positive Female Network [POFEN] & Y-Chapter working under the APLHIV. Dr.Sofia Furqan Deputy National Program Manager inaugurated the session whereas UNAIDS Country Director Dr. Mamadou Lamine Sakho was the chief guest during closing session. The National Coordinator Mr.Asghar Satti & Deputy National Coordinator Mr.Uzair Tariq disseminated the key findings of the assessment.

Some of the important key findings include that 70.4% of the female participants and 37.7% of the male participants have no formal education, 7.4% of the females and 79% of the male participants have some source of income, mean income being PKR 13000/per month. The assessment also indicates that the PLHIV need 1-5 hours to access the existing treatment centers with a financial expenditure of PKR 1000-9000. The assessment indicates user friendly environments with comfortable seating arrangements and better facilitation for the services, however once again high level of stigma and discrimination has been reported from the public sector health settings. At the time of need the availability of physician was recorded as 52.7% during last one year. 64% of the participants needed a waiting time of 1-2 hours to get the required services. Stock out of HIV preventive material like condoms was recorded as high as 97% and stock out of medicines for Sexually Transmitted Infections was recorded as 94.5%. Ironically there is no Viral Load test facility in the province which is basic measuring gauge to know the efficiency of the HIV treatment. Approximately 46% of the respondents placed the existing services in Grade-3 [grade 1 being lowest and grade-5 being the best]. Approximately 67% of the participants noted an improvement in HCPs attitude, 62% in counseling services and 59% in maintaining the confidentiality of the PLHIV. It is hoped that with introduction of integrated services, the services will improve further. Earlier the report was launched by Dr.Sofia Furqan-NACP, Dr.Ayub Rose Provincial Program Manager For HIV, Asghar Satti & Uzair Tariq of the APLHIV.

ADVOCACY ON INITIATION OF OPIATE SUBSTITUTION THERAPY [OST]

During the same workshop held on 23rd & 24th Of Jan 2017, the APLHIV also conducted series of Advocacy activities for better access of HIV Community and Key populations to treatment, care and support services and to improve their quality of life. This included an Advocacy Session on Introduction of “Opiate Substitution Therapy [OST]” for Injecting Drug Users [IDUs] in Pakistan. It is worth mentioning that in Pakistan the HIV epidemic driver is the Injecting Drug Users. In some cities the HIV prevalence among IDUs is reported to be as high as over 52%. It is also worth mentioning that OST is one of the key components of comprehensive package of HIV services recommended by WHO, UNODC and UNAIDS, but this component is yet to be introduced in Pakistan. The participants of the workshop were informed that if OST services are available the chances of HIV transmission are reduced by 54% at the population level. The APLHIV also informed the participants that a Meta analysis of 38 studies that assessed adherence to HIV treatment among IDUs living with HIV found higher treatment adherence. The participants of the workshop were also informed that by 2014, 80 countries of the world including Turkey, Iran, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Indonesia, UAE, Bahrain, Lebanon and Morocco are providing the OST services to IDUs. Alone in Iran there is over 4275 OST service points. The workshop participants were also informed that Pakistan AIDS Strategy-III also supports and advocates for introduction and expansion of OST services at the National level. During the Advocacy workshop all the participants fully supported to introduce

and expand OST services in Pakistan. An action plan was developed as result of the workshop to focus on the issue and to proceed further to ensure the availability of much needed service.

ADVOCACY ON DECENTRALIZATION OF HIV TREATMENT SERVICES

Another Advocacy workshop was organized by the APLHIV on same day which focused on decentralization of HIV treatment services across the country to ensure that all infected people have an easy access to HIV treatment. It was shared that there are approximately 102044 HIV infected people in Pakistan, out of which by end June 2016 only 8133 were accessing HIV treatment services. There exists a huge gap among the infected people and those on treatment. Stigma, discrimination, long distances involved to reach the centers, financial constraints, lack of awareness and centralization of treatment centers to major metropolitans were major reasons of this gap. The APLHIV successfully advocated that keeping the existing service delivery, it will be hard to attain the targets set in Pakistan AIDS Strategy-III, the targets set in UNAIDS 90,90, 90 approach and Fast track Strategy. The representatives of the four Provincial AIDS Control Programs and National AIDS Control Program assured the APLHIV that as required and advocated by the APLHIV new treatment centers will be established. The Provinces informed that under respective PC-1 of the provinces by 2019 approximately 25 new HIV treatment centers will be established across the Country. The APLHIV thanked the provinces for this generosity and assured full support from community side. All the participants highly appreciated the initiative of the APLHIV.

ADVOCACY FOR INCLUSION OF YOUTH IN AIDS STRATEGIES & NFR

On 2nd day of the workshop the APLHIV also advocated for inclusion of young people from Key population into Provincial and National AIDS Strategies. Pertinent data was shared by the APLHIV as evidence to support this Advocacy move. It was an eye opening discussion pertaining to issues faced by young key population. Injecting drug use is one of the high risk behaviours and policy makers need to focus on this perspective. The APLHIV was of the view that at National level, We need to have age disaggregated service delivery packages, Young population need to be involved at strategic & policy development level. Because unless youth potential is harnessed, Pakistan as fastest economically growing country can never progress forward and achieve the targets set under Sustainable Development Goals. We need to invest in young people, in linking them to services and economic opportunities so that they can contribute towards overall betterment of the country; the APLHIV was of the view. The APLHIV further added that keeping in view the vulnerability of youth to HIV infection and keeping in view the data available that indicates that in South Asia, HIV infection among young key population [aging from 15-24] has doubled during 2005-2012 in Pakistan, we need to view the needs of young key population in their specific context. The APLHIV advocated and recommended that there is a dire need to review HIV preventive programming for young key population with youth lenses. The APLHIV further

advocated that there is a dire need of commitment from all stakeholders to accelerate HIV response for young people. All the Provinces and the NACP responded positively to the advocacy and to include the Young Key population into strategies.

SENSITIZATION OF STAKEHOLDERS ON SRH&R ISSUES OF POSITIVE FEMALE

On 2nd day of the workshop the APLHIV also organized a session to discuss the issues faced by the positive females in the country with an objective to discuss the possibility of developing the guidelines on sexual & reproductive health of HIV positive females. The positive females from across the country shared their issues and experiences to form a base for developing any such guidelines. The event was followed with launching of a report on Human Rights Status of PWIDs.

LAUNCHING OF COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT CELL

The most important and unique thing during the workshop was that the APLHIV launched an “Empowerment Cell” under its umbrella with a view to empower the HIV Community and Key population economically. A small exhibition was also organized on the occasion which exhibited the skills of positive females to take step for economy empowerment. The “Empowerment Cell and the Exhibition” was inaugurated by the UNAIDS Country Director. The idea of the empowerment cell is to encourage positive people and people from key population to come forward with their expertise, turn these expertises into opportunities and make them a permanent source of income. This initiative will pave the way for economic empowerment of these marginalized communities and will lead to reduce the dependency on other. The APLHIV will provide limited support to any such volunteers and to help them to make their own respectful earnings, which will lead to improve their quality of life which is one of the objectives of the APLHIV. The “Empowerment Cell” provides equal opportunities to all genders from the marginalized communities to benefit from this initiative. Though the Cell is limited at its introduction however it is expected that with passage of time the cell will be expanded. The APLHIV has taken this initiative on self help basis. During the opening ceremony handmade products of positive females from KPK were presented. The partners highly appreciated the initiatives taken by the APLHIV during two days workshop and acknowledged the leadership role and vision of National Coordinator Asghar Satti and Deputy National Coordinator Uzair Tariq.

For more details please visit us on www.theaphiv.org.pk and www.facebook.com/APLHIV

You may also contact on asgharsatti@live.com & zaire_89@hotmail.com

For complaints, feedback and suggestions about services, telephonic counseling, referral services, basic information and to get LEGAL SUPPORT please call on our Toll Free Helpline No.0800-22209