

# STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION

## What is stigma?

- Stigma is described as quality that significantly discredits an individual in the eyes of others.
- Attaching condition or something to rejection or fear.

## What is self Stigma?

- Self Stigma is the discrediting oneself and feeling as a loser, it's often manifested in HIV infected people a lot.

## What is discrimination?

- Discrimination occurs when a distinction is made against a person that results into her/him being treated unfairly or unjustly on the basis of belonging to particular group.
- Thinking or assuming that it can never happen to us, it's here that all stigma and discrimination starts.

## How does Stigma Start?

- Stigma starts when a person thinks that they are so special unlike other human beings,
- Those who are HIV Positive stigmatize themselves by thinking negative. These makes other people see them for who they are: People will judge you by what they see coming from you.
- Religious, community and policy makers have also continued to make utterances that influence the community to stigmatize people living with HIV.
- Adverts and first approach led to instilling fear on people, by Wrapping dead bodies during the early 90s. This increased Stigma.

**Stigma is any form of negative behavior; attitude or action directed towards another person or group of persons due to their condition, real or perceived and eventually has the effect of bringing shame, disgrace, dishonor, and self pity, loss of dignity and sense of unworthiness onto the affected person.**

**Stigma and discrimination visited on PLWHAS due to their HIV positive condition in Kenya takes the form of:**

- Work places where applicants are forced to undergo mandatory HIV/AIDS test before consideration.  
**i.e. The UN policy does not require mandatory HIV testing for employment to any of its agencies and no-one with HIV is required to disclose his or her status.**
- In hospitals where doctors would look for excuses not to see clients because of HIV status.
- Denial of basic services such as insurance cover, credit facilities and church weddings.
- Non inclusion in social or political activities
- Economic sabotage where ignorant prospective customers shun their small-scale business enterprises at community level.
- Being accused blindly of bringing the HIV infection into homes ( for women)
- Schools – case of Nyumbani
- Visas Issuance.

**Impact of Stigma and Discrimination on Care and Support**

- It may interfere with accessing care and support services
- Discourages living positively
- Promotes violation of human rights,
- Reduces quality of life
- Increases mortality rate
- Disintegration of families
- Increased number of street children and families
- It increases the burden on care givers and family carers
- Increase OVC and child headed families
- Increased demand at health Facilities
- Demography interfered with
- Self stigma

## Why is AIDS Stigmatized?

- Due to lack of knowledge, information disbeliefs and fears about a)how HIV is transmitted and b)the life potential /capacity of PLHAs(no immediate death):
- Ignorance and Moral judgement about people we assume have been sexually promiscuous
- Fears about death and disease
- Cultural beliefs
- Lack of recognition of stigma

### **Stigma has made people living with HIV/AIDS be categorized as:**

- People who deserve what they have because they are;
- Sinners
- Those people with loose morals
- Cursed people
- Disobedient group

Stigma and discrimination are therefore some of the biggest obstacles to comprehensive care and support for the infected and affected in many African Countries today.

AIDS support organizations, have a goal of making HIV/AIDS a manageable chronic infection, a problem with which people can live and cope as long as possible.

Achievement of this goal, however, will depend on the role all sectors of society will play in fighting stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS.

Stigmatization of people with AIDS is equally unlawful and objectionable.

### **REACTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION**

Many times, persons stigmatized or discriminated against have the following feelings:

- Fear
- Interferes with accessing care / support service
- Hate towards oneself and others
- Discourages positive living
- Revenge
- Promotes violation of human rights
- Loss of dignity
- Reduces quality of life

- Unwanted, neglected
- Disintegration of families
- Uncared for, a bother

Consequently, these feelings result in stress and depression that translate into a lowering in the immunity

It is therefore common for people who are so stigmatized to confine to themselves, keep off friends and company of familiar acquaintances.

Stigmatized persons may deliberately infect others in anger, may refuse to seek treatment for opportunistic infections and may starve as a result of loss of appetite.

As observed earlier, stigma and discrimination against persons living with HIV/AIDS could be more catastrophic than the infection.

## **FIGHTING STIGMA & DISCRIMINATION**

- Intensified comprehensive HIV/AIDS awareness and behavior change to all sectors of the society especially the employers, insurance industries, Healthcare providers, and the policy makers' e.t.c.
- Intensified advocacy-specific community outreaches, targeting the sensitive social service sectors.
- Demystification of HIV/AIDS by training and encouraging all people living with HIV to talk for themselves and advocate for greater understanding by the society (empathy).
- Recruitment of popular opinion leaders (POL) to the forefront of fighting for behavior change and elimination of stigma and discrimination.
- Lobbying for changes in legislation to criminalize acts of stigma and discrimination, e.g. dismissal from employment as a result of an HIV positive status.
- Designation, development and dissemination of IEC materials for fighting stigma and discrimination, e.g. Roadside billboards, newspaper adverts and editorials.
- Formation of support groups i.e. sharing of experience
- Encourage key people in the society to come out publicly e.g. Rev. Canon Gideon Byamugisha of the Anglican Church in Uganda

- Allocation of resources should be scaled up to fund awareness governments give more financial and technical resources to military and armaments, than public health crises like HIV, they are fighting wrong wars.
- Governments, donors and all stakeholder should scale up the availability of ARV and increase the access to affordable health care services.
- Encourage people during funerals especially the family members to declare the cause of death
- Accepting people living with HIV
- Create more counseling centers

#### References:

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Stigma and Discrimination-as Impediments to Comprehensive Care and Support for PLWHAS-WOFAK.

Understanding and Challenging  
HIV STIGMA-Tool Kit for Action.