

TWO DAY MEETING ON THE EFFECT OF HIV CRIMINALIZATION IN AKWA IBOM STATE.

The training commenced with registration and introduction of participants. Thereafter, Roseline Ogehenebrume, Director Program, Lawyers Alert, delivered a welcome address as she acknowledged all participants present. She also thanked participants for making out time for the training despite the short notice, and asked them to be participatory and interactive.



Module One

After the welcome remarks, she went ahead to facilitate the Module 1 of the HIV Decriminalization , titled, “Transmission, Exposure and Non-disclosure”. She explained what HIV decriminalization is, the types of HIV criminalisation and exposure, giving specific examples. The participants were satisfied with the deliberations.

At the end of the deliberation, there were contributions, comments, questions and answers. One of the participants, thanked Lawyers Alert for the training and also gave more light on the implications of HIV criminalization. He advised that criminalization of HIV transmission will have grave consequences. He stated clearly that if HIV is criminalized, some Persons Living with HIV (PLWHIV) will deliberately spread the virus. He also warned that stand alone law against persons living with HIV will be the height of stigmatization and discrimination against People Living with HIV. He encouraged and advocate for more sensitization, establishment of more centres for ARV drugs and access for quality information rather than HIV criminalization.



Another participant thanked Lawyers Alert for the training and expressed his displeasure towards the intended HIV criminalization in Akwa Ibom State. He called it insensitivity and a move toward discouraging People from accessing HIV drugs and stigmatization against PLWHIV.

Module Two

Module 2 was facilitated by Elvis Torkuma, who started by acknowledging participants' hospitality and encouraged them to keep it up. He started by condemning criminalization of HIV and also said there is no place in the world where criminalization of HIV changed the way people lives. He spoke on the unlimited consequences of HIV criminalization, stating that women will be mostly affected, because they are the ones who go to hospitals more often than men.



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Furthermore, he spoke on exposure, stating that if HIV transmission is criminalized, it would expose the HIV status of persons which would violate their confidentiality rights. He added that it will be wrong to criminalize HIV, rather, Government should put efforts in sensitization, which will encourage people to go for HIV voluntary testing and the establishment of more centres for HIV drugs.

Module Three

The third module was facilitated by a facilitator. The Module was titled, “Alternative to HIV Criminalization.” Under this module, he read the UNAIDS recommendations which state that punitive laws should be removed and more supportive policies formulated. He suggested that this should be considered which shall protect the rights of PLWHIV and the ones who are negative. He further said that, instead of government to create a stand-alone law, government should focus more on policies and measures toward protecting rights of both HIV positive and negative persons.



Module Four

Day two of the training commenced with a recap of the previous day’s training. The Module was titled, “International and Regional Framework that do not promote Criminalization.” The module focused on the SADC Model Law which guarantees the respect for Human Rights. The Module spoke on the East African Community HIV Prevention and Management Act.



Action Plan

After the end of the deliberation, participants split to three groups with the purpose of adopting the Action Plan. Sandra Odukoya facilitated this session. Ideas were shared on how to draw an action plan. Each group did the presentation of their Action Plan.



After the group presentation, Roseline Ogehenebrume thanked participants for their inputs, time and commitment towards the training.