

AN AIDS COMPETENT COMMUNITY

Stakeholder's guide

A diverse group of characters standing side by side in a show of unity. Above them is a banner on which is emblazoned in bold lettering "AIDS can be beaten!". Many of the characters that appear in the main body of the booklet should be present - most notably, Sylvia, young black man in tracksuit, coloured man in overalls, Indian woman in sari, construction site supervisor in hard hat, minister of the church, tribal elder/ headman, black woman with baby strapped to her back, schoolgoing teenagers, businessman in suit, doctor and nurse, etc. The point is to represent a broad cross-section of the community. The tone of the illustration should be upbeat and optimistic.

The battle to overcome AIDS does not rest with government or NGOs alone, but with the people who live in and know their community best. We have the knowledge - so let's use it!

We don't need more information..!

Sylvia, the chief narrator

Why is it that in some communities, AIDS runs rampant, while in others, the infection rate has dropped?

Really? I didn't know that was happening anywhere!

Young black man, with a look of surprise

Sylvia

It is. In parts of Africa and Asia, where once AIDS was as prevalent as it still is in South Africa, behaviour has changed and AIDS is on the decline.

So why is this?

teenage girl in school uniform, with an inquisitive look

Sylvia

Because people can change! And they do change when they're motivated.

We don't see much of that here.

middle-aged coloured man in jacket, wearing spectacles

But we can. **Where change has been successful, it is because the change has arisen from within the community.** People do not need more information! Rather, we need to wake up to our own responsibilities as individuals and as a community.

This happens when leaders draw the community in, and help people to recognise the strengths that they already have.

It means changing our way of working. Of breaking down barriers, working together, challenging our culture, and valuing our culture, too!

You sound like you know something! I'd like to find out more about this, because I see the devastation of AIDS around me and I want to help.

Young black man from top of page, with an expression of determination and commitment

Exactly! We and our communities have to become AIDS competent.

GETTING STARTED

Sylvia, the chief narrator, addressing the reader

Friends, many communities have turned the tide against HIV and AIDS. Their success is no accident. Rather it is the result of many factors working together.

After assesment

Once the stakeholders have assessed their community, together they decide on a way forward. Some ideas for this are discussed in the accompanying handbook, *The AIDS competent community: A Facilitator's Guide*. They may wish to focus on just one or two areas of competence - say, inclusion and gender, or identifying vulnerability and access to treatment. They may even wish to single out **one idea**, for instance the idea of having multiple sexual partners, as an area to focus on. Or they may wish to focus on all areas, attempting to move up one or two levels in all areas by a certain date.

The point is that by assessing a community in depth, and coming to grips with the cultural and practical issues that are unique to their own community, stakeholders get a keener sense of how to handle the problem. There is no "one solution fits all" in the battle to change mindsets and behaviour. The solution will depend on the situation particular to your community.

A diverse group of people, standing in a circle, hands joined in a show of strength and unity

Only you know the reasons why AIDS continues to flourish in your community; only you and the people around you can get yourselves out of the situation.

By "you" we mean all in the community; all racial groups, all organisations, all who lead and all who simply live as members of the community. It takes a new attitude; one of willingness to learn from other communities; willingness to share power and knowledge; willingness to challenge aspects of our culture that contribute to the problem; and, of course, recognition that our culture contains many strengths to help us in the battle.

People can change; that is the beauty of working in this field.

Let us not work in isolation, but join hands with all in the community who have a contribution to make, no matter how small. This is how we will begin to bring about the changes we desire; changes that arise from within, and changes that will really last!

The AIDS
competent
community? What
does it really

**It means a community that has the
knowledge, strength, motivation
and unity to overcome AIDS. Any
community can become AIDS
competent.**

Young black mother,
with a baby strapped
to her back.

Sylvia

The characters stand
in the foreground. Each
has a red ribbon pinned
to his or her chest. In the
background is a rural
town scene.

Let's see what we can do right here, in our own community!

**We know the facts - AIDS education campaigns have been
running long enough for most of us to have the knowledge.
It is time for us to act together on what we know.**

**Now we need to see changes that come from within. It is
time that we, as a community, recognise our own role and
responsibilities in the battle to overcome AIDS!**

Young black man from
inside front cover,
speaking with resolve