



DAKAR DECLARATION ON FACTORING KEY POPULATIONS IN THE RESPONSE TO HIV AND AIDS IN ECOWAS MEMBER STATES

We, Ministers of Health, Heads of National AIDS Commissions, Public Prosecutors and Inspector Generals of Police of ECOWAS countries, meeting in Dakar on the 10th of April 2015

Recognizing that despite the successes achieved by the Member States, HIV and AIDS remain public health issues in the ECOWAS region

Considering that the epidemic is fueled by the continuous occurrence of new HIV infections despite the slight downward trend over the past decade;

Whereas in general, more than half of new HIV infections occur within key populations and that they are the most-at-risk people in comparison with the general population;

Acknowledging that key populations are "groups of people more likely to be exposed to HIV or to transmit it and whose commitment is critical to the success of the HIV response";

Considering that the international community, including ECOWAS (ECOWAS HIV & AIDS Regional Strategic Plan) is committed to ending the AIDS epidemic in 2030 and, to that end, has set ambitious goals to be achieved by 2020 in the areas of treatment, prevention and stigma reduction. Thus, with regard to treatment, by 2020, 90% of the people living with HIV shall know their statuses; 90% of people tested for HIV shall be placed under continuous antiretroviral treatment; 90% of the people receiving antiretroviral therapy shall have sustainable undetectable viral loads;

Recognizing that to end the epidemic in key populations, there should be an effective implementation and up-scaling of a holistic combination of priority interventions which could be biomedical, behavioral or structural;

Recognizing that programs providing services to key populations are implemented mainly by community stakeholders in ECOWAS countries with proven success in terms of behavior change and HIV incidence reduction ;

Aware that there exist many factors that impede key populations from access to services, and expose them to violence and various abuses, resulting in a reluctance to use these services ;

Whereas bold leadership is essential to mobilize communities to support the most vulnerable and marginalized groups;

Recognizing that without a significant improvement in the AIDS response for key populations, it is impossible to end the AIDS epidemic ;

Hereby solemnly commit to creating the conditions for increased access and use of HIV and AIDS response interventions for key populations living in the ECOWAS region and consequently, jointly undertake as of now, to:

- **Invest in stigma reduction programs by**
 - Including non-stigmatization modules in basic and continuing training of judges and court officers and most especially of law enforcement officers ;
 - Training individual health care providers, regulators and administrators
 - Organizing information and dialogue meetings between beneficiaries and providers

- **Enhance community service provision for key populations through**
 - Support for the creation of community centers offering education, community mobilization, essential health services, social support and advocacy for political and legal changes ;
 - Legal protection for community actors involved in various services for key populations ;

- **Streamline health systems strengthening** to better meet the specific needs of key populations ;
 - Capacity building for health actors to facilitate access to prevention, treatment and care to key populations

- **Relentlessly lay emphasis on key populations as a priority group in national HIV / AIDS response strategies**

- **Strengthen strategic knowledge or information necessary to plan interventions for key populations and monitor progress towards the attainment of objectives.**

Encourage the establishment of a regional thematic working group on key populations. The group will work under the leadership of WAHO, which will support the implementation of our commitments and provide technical support to national and regional initiatives in the HIV specific response for these populations.

Dakar, April 10th, 2015

Signed

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