

Empowering girls in the context of HIV: Faith as an asset

International Network of Religious Leaders living with or
personally affected by HIV and AIDS

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Outline

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Introduction

- INERELA+ is a network of religious Leaders
- We currently have about 15 country networks in Africa.
- We have a presence in 5 countries outside Africa
- Our core business is the empowerment of religious leaders to be agents of change.
- Our Vision- a world without HIV and AIDS related stigma.

VISION 2020

- The Start free, Stay Free and AIDS Free was launched in New York in June 2016
- We already have the deadline to end AIDS by 2030
- Vision 2020 is an important milestone
- Ending the disease in children, adolescents and young women by 2020
- Girls and young women are a specific Key population with specific vulnerabilities.

Vision 2020 Cont

- In some countries the prevalence amongst girls is 7 times higher than that of male counterparts.
- Numbers of young men living with HIV and AIDS is much lower than that of women
- Evidence has shown us that girls are engaged in intergenerational relationships
- In this presentation- focus on empowering Girls

Sexuality

- Our failure to discuss sexuality has made all of us vulnerable
- Human sexuality is a gift from God
- As the faith community, it is important for us to rescue sexuality from the forces of darkness
- Within INERELA+ we have responded to this by having specific programmes on SRHR and CSE and
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- The role of ABC prevention strategy vs SAVE
- ESA commitment – Role of the faith community



Cultural Challenges

- Patriarchy and Hierarchy
- Rituals: FGM, VT
- Early marriage- Rape
- Young women as carers - education
- Selective transformation
- Customary laws; Sexuality is taboo



SOCIAL CHALLENGES

- Socialization:
 - Gender stereotypes: Boys and girls
 - Gender inequality
- Pressure to procreate and get married
- Availability of male condoms vs sanitary towels
- High levels of exposure to sexual activity, internet and social media
- Sexual violence



Religious Assets

- Use of sacred texts
- Creation Story
- Human rights vs dignity
- Procreation and recreation
- Religious fundamentalism
- Marriage: vulnerability
- Faith Healing

Being Prophetic

- We still have a lot of power in terms of shaping peoples moral compass
- We have been part of the problem: promoted patriarchy
- Religious Leaders: promoting negative messages can be changed to positive messages
- Accurate and appropriate CSE for all ages
- Moralising HIV- opportunity to change the narrative
- Rejection of Young mothers
- Redemptive Masculinities

Being Prophetic- continued

- Health Facilities by the church- youth friendly services
- Accountability and transparency – important values
- The faith healing debate- ARVs as a gift from God
- Intergenerational relationships
- Expose Religious Leaders who abuse girls
- Laws on SGBV

Conclusion

Robert Frost:

The Road Not Taken

**Two roads diverged in a yellow wood
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveller, long I stood.....**

**Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less travelled by
And that has made all the difference**

Best Practices

- Books by WCC on HIV and sexuality
- SAVE Toolkit
- Channels of Hope
- CBS
- Tamar campaign
- Transformative masculinity
- Understanding all the Fast track agendas and the targets

Change begins with you and me.

YOUNG People must thrive and not
just barely survive

Educating them enables them to
make informed choices!

**LET US WALK
TOGETHER!!
START, STAY
AND AIDS
FREE!!**