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## **THE ZIMTA/AFT/EI/WHO/EDC HIV AND AIDS PROGRAMME FOR TEACHERS AND LEARNERS:**

### **Introduction.**

Once limited to the medical field, the issue of HIV and AIDS has spread to other socio-economic spheres because of its generalised negative impact. The education sector has been equally affected, prompting ZIMTA and other stakeholders to initiate intervention programmes. The HIV and AIDS prevention programme conducted by ZIMTA and other organizations, namely; the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), Education International (EI), Education Development Center (EDC) and World Health Organisation (WHO), has gone a long way in breaking the silence and stigma associated with the HIV and AIDS Pandemic among learners and teachers.

Since the inception of the programme, in 1999, ZIMTA continues to enjoy good relations and support from the ministries of Education, Sport and Culture, and that of Health and Child Welfare, other organizations involved in AIDS the country, such as ZIM. CDC, and the WHO, sister organizations in the region, and Cooperating partners, whose financial, material and technical support have enabled ZIMTA to spread the programme to a wider audience, which includes teachers, learners, and the

community. This information will capture the activities conducted by ZIMTA in the HIV and AIDS programme, the successes scored, challenges met and the way forward.

### **Training of Conveners.**

The EFAIDS Programme is school based. Focal persons, (Study Circle Conveners) are trained using material generated by the Association. Such material enables the teachers and learners to discuss issues related to HIV and AIDS in an atmosphere of collegiality, and to find solutions to challenges facing teachers and learners in a particular setting.

The first training of Master Trainers was conducted in January 2001. The group was made up of 20 participants from the provinces. All members of the National Executive Committee were given orientation on the programme. This was followed by the training of the first group of school based HIV and AIDS Study Circle Conveners in 2001.

The initial training and retraining workshops were conducted in 2004, 2005 and 2006.

Each of the ten ZIMTA provinces selects at least one participant from their schools for the training. The aim is to cascade the training to all the members to learn the skills on the use of the ZIMTA/AFT kit and the EI Exercise Book. To date, over 2000 teachers have

been trained nationally. With an average of 15 members per study circle, the programme reaches out to over 30 000 teachers and learners throughout the country.

### **Facilitators.**

Master Trainers, (these are a group of selected teachers and ZIMTA full time staff) conduct training in their respective provinces. In addition, experts from the Ministries also assist with technical expertise and latest statistics on the pandemic.

### **Successes**

So far, the effects of the ZIMTA, HIV and AIDS programme is visible and audible in the schools and the communities around the schools. Some schools have viable AIDS Action Clubs, such which inculcate in learners, a sense of responsibility to fight stigma and discrimination associated with HIV and AIDS. At some schools, members have come together in their various Study Circle groups to identify those learners affected by HIV. They give them material support such as procurement of learning material, and decent clothing and advise them on medication and diet matters.

The visibility and the seriousness with which ZIMTA treats the HIV and AIDS issue has prompted the Public Service Commission to invite ZIMTA to participate in national activities. Alongside other stakeholders, such as, the National Aids Council, UNAIDS, and other players, ZIMTA participated in the drawing up of the Public Service HIV and

AIDS Implementation Strategy Policy Document. This policy document was launched for the entire Civil Service on 3 June 2005.

What has been done in ZIMTA has been appreciated by other organizations as evidenced by ZIMTA Master Trainers and Conveners being invited to facilitate at national and international workshop these include DAAC, WAC, Church organizations inside and outside the country

Assertiveness instilled in the learners through activities to avoid HIV infection has made it possible to recognize potential incidents that might expose them to abuse. In some cases, pupils have reported such cases to the school authorities.

ZIMTA has collaborated with other organisations in sensitizing society on Stigma and Discrimination of people living with HIV and AIDS. ZIMTA has also interacted with people living with HIV and AIDS who have openly revealed their HIV status and are receiving medical care. This has gone a long way in encouraging teachers to go for HIV testing and to identify such groups for psycho-social, medical and material support.

#### **Challenges:**

AFT/EI/ WHO have assisted ZIMTA financially, technically and materially. However, the hyperinflationary economic conditions that prevail in the country have made it difficult for ZIMTA to keep to the budget. ZIMTA needs more funding.

We are grateful to EI/WHO/EDC and the AFT for the material and financial support received. We received Exercise Books, which were enough to go round all the participants. However, the local version of the ZIMTA AFT/Kit was delayed.

#### **Conclusion and the way forward:**

This presentation, highlights the growth of the ZIMTA EFAIDS programme with the following emerging trends and successes, training of Master Trainers, training of Study Circle Conveners, establishment of vibrant School/College based Study Circles. However, a lot still has to be done in the areas of monitoring and care giving.

From the ZIMTA /AFT, the programme has evolved to the ZIMTA AFT/ EI/WHO/ EDC EFAIDS programme. HIV and AIDS is a universal problem that must be solved by all the people concerned. It is a workplace issue, which, ZIMTA, as a trade Union, should take up more vigorously as a collective bargaining issue for the teachers and learners in Zimbabwe.