

Usa's hand-out3 - Understanding HIV/AIDS-Related Stigma Is Crucial to HIV/AIDS Work!

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Issue:

There is still a great deal of stigma and discrimination (S&D) against those infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS, even among those who work with them and assist them.

Project:

The AIDS Education Programme (AEP) has been facilitating stigma-awareness sessions for AIDS activists, faith leaders, local governments, government and non-government workers, PLWHIV leaders, and community leaders. Apart from using some tools developed by the ICRW, AEP also developed and used other participatory tools to help participants reflect on, confront, and understand their own preconceptions and prejudices.

Results:

Three tools have been found particularly effective. The “Who’s guilty, Who’s innocent?” continuum exercise enables participants to recognize their own preconceptions/prejudices against vulnerable populations which ultimately lead to S&D against them, more so when they live with HIV/AIDS. The “Agree-Disagree-Not sure” exercise enables participants to check the facts and their own prejudices/misunderstandings, and to be aware of the lens they use to view PLWHIV. The “Stigmatizing language” exercise increases participants’ awareness of stigmatizing words often used in everyday life.

Lessons Learned:

We need to recognize our common humanity, vulnerabilities, and capacities, in order to free ourselves and others from prejudices, stigma, and discrimination. Such awareness is crucial to successful HIV/AIDS work.

Try the “Who’s guilty, Who’s innocent?” continuum exercise for yourself! Better yet, try it with your team for more reflection and discussion.

Look at the cards. Reflect and put the cards on the guilty-innocent continuum based on who you think is guilty and who you think is innocent.

Ask yourself why you think that way. Ask yourself lots of questions!

What are the preconceptions/prejudices that you have about each ‘group’? How can you work with the groups with these preconceptions/prejudices without stigmatizing and discriminating against them yourselves? How can you deal with these preconceptions/prejudices?

Are we all vulnerable? Is someone really guilty or innocent? Is it just the lens we are using? Are we all human?

Enjoy the exercise! You are welcome to leave your thoughts here and/or contact us later at uduongsaa@hotmail.com.

