



## **REPORT ON DOCUMENTARY/FILM/MOVIE ABOUT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND HIV AND AIDS.**

Documentary Theme: **STEPPING INTO THE UNKNOWN**

**VENUE: DURBAN**

**DATE: 22-26 MAY 2010**

**REPORT BY: ISAAC NKGANETSANG FORM BOTSWANA**

### **INTRODUCTION**

It has been discovered that People with Disabilities are among the most stigmatized, poorest and least educated of the entire world population. Citizen individuals who live with permanent physical, deaf, blindness, intellectual and or mental healthy disability, has been almost entirely overlooked despite the risk that they are exposed to all known factor for HIV.

It is commonly assumed that individuals with disabilities are at low risk of HIV infection. They are incorrectly believed that they are sexually inactive, unlikely to use drugs or alcohol and at less risk of violence or rape than their non-disabled peers.

The documentary is mainly concerned with issues of disability and HIV. There are four members with disabilities from four different countries with different types of disabilities and different status of HIV. They met to come and share their experiences and views on disability and HIV issues.

Member counties who convened for the documentary were South Africa where the documentary was shot, Botswana, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Members from these four countries has set a determined, dedicated and commitment to come and show case in raising awareness on disability and HIV by participating in the main event "BUNGEE JUMPING" a Film associated with TESTING for the first time or once more at Voluntary Counseling Centre VCT.

### **WHY BUNJEE JUMPING**

One would wonder what BUNGEE JUMPING is, I would like to say "It is taking risk" it is a scenario where ropes are tight around ones waist, and that person jumps down from the mountain cliff 100m at the speed of 120km/hrs and swing six meters above the valley been held by the ropes from above.

This is associated to someone who walks in the VCT for the first time for Counseling and testing for HIV virus. It is associated to someone who does not know his HIV status, it is a scene where one may wonder if he\she is HIV positive or negative, so jumping down from mountain top one would be scared of dying or loosing his life as always a myth that if someone test positive is going to loose his life or is dearth sentenced.

People with Disabilities are often excluded from mainstreaming interventions, prevention and care. The idea of bungee jumping is, a creation of awareness raising and stepping up for inclusion

### **THE IDEA OF INTERING INTO THE UNKNOWN**

Disability and HIV are still a neglected issue, having HIV test is daunting, just like stepping into the unknown, or jumping off from the mountain top or cliff, one is jumping to the unknown. The jumping idea is attached to when you jump\test, you get scared. When jumping you get support from the harness and the jumping instructor and the courage developed. Just like when you go for HIV testing, you gather courage, support from the counselor before and after testing. You also get courage from your partner, family members, friend and the community.

After jumping\testing you are aware you have overcome the fear and you are in control. One feels a sense of control, achievement and accomplishment and now have a direction in life and may make life time decisions either tested positive or negative

## STIGMA REDUCTION

As is always the case, there is always a fear of one disclosing his/her HIV status and it takes courage. This fear comes along with how people will react towards your status disclosure, Testing and Disclosing is fearful; There is the fear of the unknown. Testing, Disclosing or taking off from the cliff is a sign of getting away with stigma.

## EXPIRIENCE OBTAINED FROM THE FILM "STEPPING INTO THE UNKNOWN"

Having met other members from other countries with different disabilities, I learned a lot about disability and HIV. Learned that disability has not received a due attention although persons with disabilities are found among key population at a high risk of exposure to HIV, I have learned that people with HIV may get permanent impairment as the diseases progresses and may be considered to have disability when Social, Economic, Political or other barriers hinder their full effective participation in the society on an equal basis with others.

To my experience the documentary calls the action needed to increase the participation of the society and People with Disabilities with HIV in the HIV response. More also i have learned that being Disabled and having HIV is a double burden to where one has to interact with the environment or society when can result in stigma, discrimination or other barriers to their participation.

## PERSONAL FINDINGS FROM THE MOVIE

I have learned that People with Disabilities can be at the risk of HIV infection for the following reason:

- Women and girls especially with intellectual disabilities may experience sexual violence or abuse during their life time leaving them exposed to HIV risk infection. Here there is a need of education based on sexual matters
- Lack of access to HIV education, information and prevention services. Disability is turned away from HIV education forums because of assumptions that they are not sexually active or do not involve in any risk behavior, i.e. alcohol and drug abuse substances.
- Lack of access to treatment, care and support because service providers lack knowledge about disability or misinformed or stigmatizing attitudes towards persons with disability. Services offered at health services are information inaccessible

## WAY FORWARD SUGGESTION

I think we have only just began, i am more optimistic and do believe the film documentary is a mileage that is going to create disability and HIV awareness into development agenda like government policies and programs

This is a wake up call to disability fraternity to voice out HIV and disability issues in unity. Physical, deaf, blind and intellectual disability cannot make it if we stand up as one type of disability lobbying for one type of disability issues. There is a need for unity pertaining disability with society. The Disabled People Organizations, Government Departments, Private sectors need to make a combined effort to put the issue of disability and HIV into the **National Strategic Plan**

I want a team which will represent disability issues including HIV in all existing National Department, be it Public sector, private or parastatal. I want disability to be included in HIV/AIDS programs. There is a great need to come up with support group of disability to curb the issue of Disability and HIV and AIDS

## NEED NOW ON DISABILITY AND HIV

I learned that we are far from achieving Universal access in many African countries. There is a need to include People with Disabilities in our programming.

There is a need for all Ministries to have an advisor on Disability issues, be it ministry of health, Environment, labour and home affairs, Education and others to integrate disability issue in to development agenda

Issues of accessibility eg ramps, health facilities, sign language, interpreter in some departments, needs an understandable and readable information format for all type of disability.

There is serious need for education on issues of sexuality for persons with intellectual disability on sexual matters.