COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF A 3-DAY WORKSHOP ORGANIZED BY SOCIETY FOR FAMILIY HEALTH (SFH) FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES HELD ON JUNE 6 – 8, 2018 AT DOVER HOTEL, IKEJA, LAGOS.

Background

The key population is made up of Female Sex Workers (FSW), Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) and People Who Inject Drugs (PWID) and are subjected to harassment, extortion and violence on a regular basis by most segments of the society especially the Law Enforcement Agencies (LEA). The law enforcement agents are pivotal to addressing a lot of the legal and human rights issues that hinder key populations from living in a complete state of physical, mental and social well-being with unfettered access to integrated HIV treatment, care and support.

Society for Family Health, a Principal Recipient of the Global Fund organised a three days training aimed at equipping Law enforcement officers on knowledge, skills and expertise to provide a stigma-free and safe environment for the KPs to access healthcare services. The overall goal of the training was to promote an enabling environment for HIV intervention for KPs in Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

- Increase awareness and knowledge of Law enforcement agents on key populations and their unique health issues.
- Promote human rights of KP as it relates to access and uptake of healthcare services and treatment
- Improve resolution and documentation of reported cases of human right abuses on KP for evidence informed programming.


Whereas, Nigeria currently criminalizes and penalizes behaviors of key populations deemed to be at higher risk of acquiring or transmitting Human Immunodeficiency Virus and the response to her HIV epidemic does not adequately address the rights and needs of key populations.

Whereas, the national response has achieved some public health successes, palpable efforts to address rights issues remain a challenge

Whereas, the impact of rights-restricting codes on the nation’s HIV epidemic is real, criminalization impedes key populations’ access to HIV prevention and treatment services

Whereas, the law prohibiting same-sex relationships in Nigeria has led to increased incidence of stigma and discrimination against MSM such that they are afraid of accessing HIV care and treatment from public health facilities

Whereas the law enforcement agencies knowledge of sexual diversity of key population is limited

Resolutions

The participants at the meeting discussed extensively and resolved that:
- Law enforcement agencies have the mandate of protecting the lives and properties of all citizens irrespective of their age, sex, gender, habits, orientations or professions.
- Training for law enforcement agencies will be pursued aggressively at national and sub-national levels.
- Public health desk offices will be established at all police stations, NDLEA, Prisons and other law enforcement agencies.
- Law Enforcement Agencies in partnership with CSO will sensitize key population on their human rights
- Sensitization and awareness of the general public as regards key populations in partnership with the media, CSO, Religious bodies and traditional institutions.
- Law Enforcement and health sectors work in partnership to develop and support legislation policy and practice that facilitate the common goals of HIV prevention through enhancing community safety and crime reduction.
- Law enforcement officers must see themselves as key partners in the implementation of public health programmes for key populations.
- Law enforcement agencies will refer and link key populations to treatment and care services and not dehumanize and criminalize them

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