Stigma and discrimination among people living with HIV and AIDS in rural areas of Zimbabwe. A case study of Musana communal land ward 16 of Mashonaland Central

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ABSTRACT

Stigma and discrimination is a major cause for continuous spread of the AIDS pandemic worldwide. HIV/AIDS is more prominent in rural areas where extreme poverty and gender issues are major determinants. AIDS is an immune disorder caused by the HIV which cripples the immune system. Stigma and discrimination have been identified as major obstacles to effective response to HIV. The research seeks to understand stigma and discrimination associated with people living HIV/AIDS in rural communities. The objectives are to determine the causes of HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination, its effects and what can be done to reduce it. Quantitative and qualitative research design was used. The targeted population was people living with HIV/AIDS who receive food at Rutope clinic who are between the ages of 18-50. Probability sampling was used focusing on simple random sampling which enables everyone to have a chance to participate. Lack of knowledge, fear of contagion, behaviour associated with HIV/AIDS, fear of care giving and myths surrounding the disease are major causes of HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination. There are many effects of stigma and discrimination, it does not affect the individual alone the family is also victims of stigma and discrimination. It leads to isolation, rejection, low self-esteem, early death, depression and stress. Some people were denied employment, some were isolated by their core workers and some were ill-treated by health workers because of their status. There are many ways which can be done to reduce stigma and discrimination in Musana communal lands. Aids education is the method highlighted by most respondents. This includes teaching people about the realities of these diseases, its transmission so that they won’t isolate people, fearing to contract the disease. Awareness campaigns are another way highlighted by respondents, focus group discussions and workshops are other ways of reducing HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination.