



## **MODULE 8**

# **Communication Issues in Stigma and Discrimination**



# Objectives

- Identify HIV/AIDS–related stigma and discrimination
- Address stigma and discrimination in the context of providing PMTCT services
- Outline human rights issues in PMTCT



# Objectives

- Identify communication gaps in PMTCT of HIV
- Explain personal values and attitudes with regard to HIV/AIDS prevention and care
- State the importance of enlisting the support of all stakeholders for PMTCT



# Communication Issues in Stigma and Discrimination

## Section 1

# Stigma and Discrimination



# Introduction to Stigma and Discrimination

- HIV/AIDS-related stigma is increasingly recognized as the single greatest challenge to slowing the spread of HIV/AIDS
- HIV/AIDS – a threefold epidemic:
  - **HIV**
  - **AIDS**
  - **Stigma, discrimination and denial**



# Stigma and Discrimination

- Media
- Health services
- Workplace
- Religion
- Family and local community



# Stigma vs. Discrimination

- Stigma refers to unfavourable attitudes and beliefs directed toward someone or something
- Discrimination is the treatment of an individual or group with partiality or prejudice



# Stigma vs. Discrimination

- **Stigma** reflects an attitude
- **Discrimination** is an act or behaviour



## Themes Related to Stigma

- Attitudes and actions are stigmatising
- Choice of language may express stigma
- Lack of knowledge and fear foster stigma



# Themes Related to Stigma

- Shame and blame are associated with stigma and HIV
- Stigma makes disclosure more difficult
- Stigma can exist, even in a caring environment



# Effects of Stigma

- Social isolation
- Limited rights and reduced access to services
- Secondary stigma (stigma by association)



# Human Rights

- Freedom from discrimination is a fundamental human right
- Discrimination on the basis of HIV/AIDS status is prohibited by human rights standards



# PMTCT Programmes and Human Rights

Women have a right to:

- Determine the course of their reproductive lives
- Access information about HIV/AIDS and infection prevention
- Access testing and counselling services



# PMTCT Programmes and Human Rights

Women have a right to:

- Know their HIV status
- Decide not to be tested or to choose not to know the result of an HIV test
- Make informed decisions about infant feeding



# Communication Issues in Stigma and Discrimination

## Section 2

# Key Issues in Communication for PMTCT



# Communication Issues in Stigma and discrimination

## The Communication Pathway

- **Sender** → one who sends message
- **Message received** → information in form that sender expects to be received
- **Medium** → channel through which message is transmitted
- **Receiver** → person who receives information
- **Feedback** → information necessary to comprehend message (from receiver to sender)



# Communication Issues in Stigma and Discrimination

## Section 3

# Communication Interventions



## Consequences of Stigma in PMTCT Programmes

- Discourages access to ANC services
- Prevents access to HIV testing, counselling and PMTCT services
- Discourages disclosure of HIV test results to partner(s)
- Discourages acceptance of PMTCT interventions
- Inhibits use of safer infant-feeding practises
- Confers secondary stigmatisation on child



# Addressing Stigma in PMTCT Programmes

Interventions addressing HIV-related stigma take place at all levels

- National
- Community and social/cultural
- PMTCT site/facility
- Individual



# National Level Interventions

For national HIV/AIDS initiatives addressing human rights of PLWHA:

- Enlist political support
- Encourage high-profile individuals to serve as leaders and role models



# National Level Interventions (continued)

- Support
  - **Human rights legislation**
  - **National efforts to scale up ARV treatment**
  - **Funding for PMTCT services**
- Share
  - **PMTCT success stories**



# Community Level Interventions

In the community, promote:

- HIV awareness and knowledge
- PMTCT activities as integral to health care and HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment
- Referrals to and from PMTCT services
- Awareness of PMTCT interventions



## **Community Level Interventions (continued)**

In the community, promote:

- Partnerships with churches, schools and community organisations
- PLWHA in implementing initiatives
- Networking with needed linkages
- Ongoing training



# PMTCT Programme Level Interventions

- Integrate PMTCT into antenatal care services
- Encourage partner involvement
- Enlist partner and family support to decrease HIV transmission



# **PMTCT Programme Level Interventions (continued)**

Educate and train healthcare providers in:

- HIV transmission
- Activities to address stigma
- Awareness of language that describes PLWHA
- PMTCT-related policies
- Counselling and safer infant feeding practices



## **PMTCT Programme Level Interventions (continued)**

Educate and train healthcare providers in:

- Controlling infection
- Maintaining confidentiality and obtaining informed consent
- Serving as role models and advocates
- Facilitating community support and linkages



# Role of PMTCT Programme Managers

Enlist help of managers to ensure policies and procedures are in place and implemented for:

- **Non-discrimination**
- **Confidentiality**
- **Universal Precautions**
- **Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)**



## Module 8: Key Points

- Stigma reflects an attitude, while discrimination is an act or behaviour
- Discrimination is often defined in terms of human rights and entitlements in health care, employment, the legal system, social welfare, reproductive, and family life
- Stigma and discrimination are often interlinked. Stigmatising thoughts can lead to discrimination and human rights violations



## Module 8: Key Points

- In communication, the intended information may not be understood by the receiver if the message is not adequately passed or the wrong medium is used
- Community mobilisation is necessary for the development and group ownership of PMTCT. This ensures sustainability.
- Advocacy, the process of gathering, organizing and formulating information into arguments, is a very important tool in community mobilization for PMTCT



## Module 8: Key Points

- International and national human rights declarations affirm that all people have the right to be free from discrimination on the basis of HIV/AIDS status
- PMTCT programme staff have a responsibility to respect the rights of all women and men, irrespective of their HIV status



## Module 8: Key Points

- HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination may discourage PLWHA from accessing key HIV services. It may also:
  - Discourage disclosure of HIV status
  - Reduce acceptance of safer infant-feeding practices
  - Limit access to education, counselling, and treatment even when services are available and affordable
- PMTCT programme staff can help reduce stigma and discrimination in the healthcare setting, community, and on the national level



## Module 8: Key Points

- Encourage PMTCT staff to serve as role models by treating PLWHA just as they would treat patients assumed to be HIV-negative
- Involve PLWHA in every aspect of the PMTCT programme
- Promote partner participation and community support