



SUPPORT GROUPS FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS (PLWHA)



OBJECTIVES

- To highlight the need for support groups
- To emphasize the importance of support groups
- To discuss criteria for support groups formation



NEED FOR SUPPORT GROUP



- Support groups provide a focus for PLWHAs with common issues, such as taking action to solve their problems and improving their lives
- Support groups enable people to achieve much more together than facing challenges as a lone person
- Support groups are a common forum that give members a sense of belonging
- Support groups are a place to share skills and knowledge to provide support to each other



NEED FOR SUPPORT GROUPS



- Support groups establish a network of relationships for patients to help one another overcome the challenges of HIV/AIDS
- Support groups provide a forum where PLWHAs come together to talk with one voice on a common issue



WHO ARE SUPPORT GROUPS FOR?



- All people living with HIV/AIDS desiring to relate and share their experiences with others
- Those affected who genuinely want to commit their time and other resources to supporting the fight against the challenges of the HIV/AIDS disease



CRITERIA FOR FORMING A SUPPORT GROUP



- Must have at least 10 persons living with HIV/AIDS
- Must have regular meetings
- Should have an executive body
- Should have an office place for purpose of communication and linkages
- Must have a constitution
- Must be registered with the national body
- Must have a record of activities carried out



REACHING OUT TO POTENTIAL MEMBERS



- Place information about your support group at strategic points, e.g. hospitals, religious centres or organizational offices
- Reach infected or affected persons through group members with information
- Seek assistance of health care providers to give out information about the group



GROUP AIM/OBJECTIVE



- It is important from the beginning to develop and clarify a common understanding among members and potential members of the group
- It is important, especially at the beginning to define simple aims/objectives for your group that provides clarity of purpose and potentials
- Objectives can be as simple as “improving the lives of positive people” or can be more specific, such as “advocating for equal human rights for drug users who are living with or at risk of HIV/AIDS.”



REGULATORY ISSUES



Giving every one a chance to voice his or her concerns is vital to build group ownership and involvement, but simple ground rules of behavior are important to establish early for the group: e.g. show respect for each other, one person speaks at a time, all discussion at meetings will be kept confidential, one person will be nominated as a group facilitator or leader at the start of each meeting

Group can develop accordingly



GROUP ACTIVITIES



- Whether it is your first time meeting or not, it is vital that everyone is clear about what the group is all about.
- Group activities should include some of the following:
 - group exercises where everyone gets an opportunity to contribute
 - Small group work where members can talk about issues such as medicines, food, income generating opportunities, project planning, etc.



NETWORK



- Networks are like any relationship, and a nurturing effort needs to be put into them to keep the partnership alive and growing
- Regular and clear communications, some level of compromise, and real desire to make it work all must be present
- True network relationships are based on equality and equity: common goals, mutual benefit, desire to work together, respect and honesty



NETWORK



- Your group may want to network with several other groups or organizations such as State Action Committee on AIDS, some health care donor agencies etc.
- Successful prevention and care responses to the HIV challenges requires the involvement of all those affected by this virus. It is important that this involvement is in the spirit of true partnership.