

Mini Review

An Evaluation of the Measures to Reduce the Impact of Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome in Zimbabwe and Report on the Achievements Made to Date

Tatenda T. Ngara, BSc*

University of Zimbabwe, 630 Churchill Avenue, Harare, Zimbabwe

*Corresponding author

Tatenda T. Ngara, BSc

University of Zimbabwe, 630 Churchill Avenue, Harare, Zimbabwe; E-mail: ngaratatenda1996@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The impact of human immunodeficiency virus infection and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) on individuals, communities and organisations is a major bone of resentment the world over. Human capital planning (HCP) focuses on helping managers set the direction for an organisation in regard to its future. Human Resources needs but lamentably this is made difficult because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic which among other devastating effects is short life expectancy which leads to high turnover within organisations. To reduce this catastrophe, a collaborative effort has been made by International organisations, the government and the private sector to provide measures to fight the impact of HIV/AIDS. These measures have been largely effective and include initiatives such as obtaining Political support by leaders, engaging multiple economic sectors, educating the youth on HIV/AIDS, fighting stigmatization, enhancing poverty and improving free counselling interventions just but to mention a few. The achievements brought by these measures to date in Zimbabwe include reduction of workplace discrimination against HIV/AIDS infected people, formation of the National AIDS Control Programme by the Ministry of Health in 1987 and implementation of a mandatory 3% AIDS levy to support HIV prevention.

Keywords

Antiretroviral; Discrimination; Poverty; Sexually transmitted infection; Stigma; Zimbabwe.

INTRODUCTION

Human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) are illnesses that cause the immunity of a person against infections to deteriorate due to the erosion of a person's immunity system (World Health Organization (WHO), 1999). When the pandemic became prevalent in Zimbabwe early 2000's, HIV/AIDS affected people faced challenges such as stigmatization and discrimination both within work places and their communities. This saw employees in Zimbabwe lose their jobs and being chased away from their communities as they were treated as outcasts who got the infection through sexual immorality which was grossly wrong. School going pupils with HIV/AIDS had to stop going to school as teachers refused to teach

them fearing that they would get the infection from them and this was also wrong and fallacious. Due to further education about this pandemic, the government of Zimbabwe then responded through various measures to fight the effects of HIV/AIDS and these have been discussed vividly below also portraying how effective they have been and the key achievements between 2000 and 2020.

Measure I

Human immunodeficiency virus infection and acquired immune deficiency syndrome are mainly spread through unprotected sexual activity and hence the reason why the major measure to reduce its impacts has been involving all community stake holders in obtaining and spreading education on how to fight against this pandemic

disease. Multiple economic sectors such as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO), Public and the Private sectors have been involved in conducting research about HIV/AIDS/sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) and making sure that every citizen from the youth, workers and elderly are educated on how the diseases are spread, how to report them and how to prevent contamination and spread.

Evaluation

This has been a positive measure as efforts from the various stake holders have also ensured that people are educated on how they can live a long and happy life with HIV/AIDS. This has been very useful in curbing impacts such as suicide, turnover and reduced average life expectancy which more-so affects a country's production.

Measure 2

Obtaining Political support from the leaders of the country has been another positive measure to reduce the impacts of HIV/AIDS. Medication to fight the symptoms of HIV and AIDS are expensive and hence measures by the Government to subsidise prices on the anti-retro viral (ARV) medication which however consequently leads to high health expenditure which can cripple the economic growth of a country. When leaders of the country are committed to fighting the HIV/AIDS pandemic, laws and policies are made that ensure people do not irresponsibly spread the diseases to others. According to the Criminal Act of 1996, if a person does not disclose their positive HIV/AIDS status to their sexual partner and infects them, they liable to punishment by law. In addition, government has initiated measures through laws that advocate the screening of donated blood and blood products to other patients which has been very positive in fighting spread of the diseases.

Measure 3

Another affirmative measure to reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS has been advocating openness about being HIV/AIDS positive and avoiding discrimination and stigmatization of infected people. There has been a sharp decline in workforce due to infected employees shunning work due to being discriminated and stigmatized for having the diseases both by management and by co-workers. Some managers discriminate HIV/AIDS infected people from being hired as they are a cost to the company through excess health or medical cover, life insurance claims and absenteeism. Other employees may fear to get infected from communication with infected people which is also wrong. To combat this problem, organisations have employed measures that ensure that HIV/AIDS status is not revealed till the candidate has been employed and also through educating employees that the diseases are not spread through sharing cups, handshakes and other non-sexual contact.

Evaluation

This has been a positive move by the government as it enables HIV/AIDS infected citizens an equal chance to get employed by

organisations without being stereotyped by the employer. As discrimination and stigmatization lead to depression and stress, many organisations have adopted having a counselling department to help people suffering from HIV/AIDS to cope in their day-to-day lives and also to provide free HIV/AIDS testing.

Measure 4

Enhancing poverty alleviation strategies has been another measure to reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS. Poverty has driven many people into prostitution which made them more prone to getting HIV/AIDS. Consequently when working members of the family are infected most income is invested in ARV's than in children's education which inevitably begins the cycle of prostitution again. To fight against this poverty, social mobilization of both infected and non-infected people has been employed to build community projects that can sustain the livelihoods of people. NGO have been very instrumental in this cause through donation of food, clothes and livestock to communities with a high HIV/AIDS prevalence.

Evaluation

This reduces impacts of HIV/AIDS such as reduction of savings or investment both to individuals and also other organisations that employ the infected people. Involving everyone in community projects also leads to formation of other prevention, control, care and impact mitigation strategies.

Key Achievements

Achievements have been notably seen from these measures that have been put in place to reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS.

Achievement 1: The greatest triumph in Zimbabwe being statutory instrument (SI) 202 of 1998, which offers a training package on HIV/AIDS. This has enabled various organisations to participate in the HIV/AIDS prevention programs and also on how to fight discrimination and stigmatization within the workplace. This has seen a reduction in employee suicide, absenteeism and turnover and in the increase in production within the country.¹

Achievement 2: The establishment of the National AIDS Control Programme by the Ministry of Health in 1987 has also been a great achievement from the measures to reduce impacts of HIV/AIDS as it has seen infected people gain access to quality care and treatment with dignity. As a result, HIV/AIDS treatment centres have been opened and there has been a significant rise in provisions of ARV medicines and diagnosis for both adults and children.²

Achievement 3: Another great achievement to date on the measures to reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS is the implementation of the mandatory 3% AIDS levy on employee's gross salary that is collected by government to collaborate with the Ministry of Health and other stakeholders in prevention and care of people that are living with HIV/AIDS. This has also helped ensure sustainability and reducing aid dependency in the national response to HIV/AIDS. As a result, some infected people have been put on government programs that see them receive free ARV's.^{3,4}

CONCLUSION

Succinctly, it can be deduced from the above essay that a collaborative effort has been made by International organisations, the Government and the Private sector to provide measures to fight the impact of HIV/AIDS. These measures have been largely effective and include initiatives such as obtaining Political support by leaders, engaging multiple economic sectors, educating the youth on HIV/AIDS, fighting discrimination and stigmatization, enhancing poverty and improving free counselling interventions just but to mention a few. The achievements brought about by these measures to date in Zimbabwe include reduction of workplace discrimination and stigmatization against HIV/AIDS infected people, formation of the National AIDS Control Programme by the Ministry of Health in 1987 and implementation of a mandatory 3% AIDS levy to support HIV prevention.

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