



Members of the IPU Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS with users of Muhimbili Rehabilitation Centre for Injecting Drug Users.

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As the Tanzanian experience demonstrates, parliamentary action really makes a difference in curbing the spread of HIV and scoring important health gains particularly among women and children. IPU's Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS will make sure that successes are not made in isolation. As MPs in many countries have limited resources and skills to address the AIDS emergency, collecting practices that work will ensure time- and cost-effective actions. Solutions are there to win the fight against HIV/AIDS, let's spread them around the world.

Hon. Marleen Temmerman, Chair of IPU's Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS

Learning from Tanzanian MPs' leadership on HIV/AIDS

IPU Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS field visit to Tanzania, 10-12 September 2012

Visits to the field are essential to share experiences and spread successes in parliamentary action around the world. By fostering debate, enacting legislation and adopting budgets on health care and human rights, parliaments play a leading role in creating the right conditions to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS.

IPU's Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS has in the past made fruitful visits to Viet Nam and South Africa. Impressed by the achievements of Tanzanian MPs in a challenging HIV/AIDS context, the Advisory Group decided to send a mission to the African country in September 2012.

Tanzanian MPs, united in a coalition, spearheaded the fight against HIV/AIDS in their country. Their action led to a lower HIV prevalence rate, wider access to treatment and protection of the rights of people affected by the disease and increased funds for HIV/AIDS issues.

Five members of the Advisory Group and two MPs from neighbouring Kenya and South Africa visited the capital Dar es Salaam in a bid to document Tanzanian MPs' actions and boost parliamentary leadership on HIV/AIDS around the world.





People wait outside Temeke Hospital HIV Clinic, Tanzania.

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The context: HIV/AIDS in Tanzania

Declared a national disaster in 1999 by President Mkapa, HIV/AIDS affects up to 50 per cent of people in groups both most at risk and most stigmatized, such as sex workers, injecting drug users and men who have sex with men. The national prevalence rate stands at 5.7 per cent.

The HIV epidemic has had a serious impact on the Tanzanian economy as it has struck the most economically active group of adults, those between 15 and 49 years. The number of AIDS orphans is growing with an estimated 1 million children having lost a parent to AIDS, out of a total population of 47 million.

Meeting with HIV actors

Advisory Group members met with Tanzanian MPs and parliamentary staff, Vice-President Mohammed Gharib Bilal, and researchers at the Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences. They also witnessed on-the-ground action by MPs at a rehabilitation centre for injecting drug users and involving the NGO Kimara Peer Educators working with orphans and vulnerable children in Dar es Salaam.

The Tanzanian approach: a coalition for maximum impact

Much of Tanzania's success was achieved through an exceptionally active coalition, the Tanzania Parliamentarians AIDS Coalition (TAPAC), with a unique membership of 75 per cent of current Tanzanian MPs, the country's President and Prime Minister and many other high-level politicians. Over the past decade, TAPAC's actions have contributed to lowering the HIV prevalence rate and securing an increased budget for HIV/AIDS in Tanzania, from TShs 226 billion (US\$ 143.5 million) in 2005 to TShs

595.7 billion (US\$ 378.5 million) in 2008.

Formed in 2001, some of TAPAC's key achievements include the adoption of one of the most progressive legislations on HIV/AIDS, and the creation of a Standing Committee on HIV/AIDS Affairs in 2008, which truly mainstreamed HIV in the work of Parliament.

IPU's Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS advocates for the creation of groupings similar to TAPAC in each parliament, as a particularly effective mechanism to keep MPs informed about HIV/AIDS issues, ensure concrete action in terms of policy and institutional framework, and follow-up in constituencies.

TAPAC leads advocacy efforts in the highest political spheres and on the ground, working hand in hand with people affected by HIV. It supports people living with HIV and most at-risk groups, spreads prevention messages and makes people aware of their rights.

MPs in Tanzania regularly interact with researchers to translate scientific findings into policy, key to a

successful HIV response that should be replicated by MPs around the world.

Showing leadership and combating stigma

The Tanzanian experience shows the tremendous importance of high-level political leadership on HIV/AIDS, particularly by MPs.

As in many African countries, stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV is a challenge and a key factor discouraging voluntary HIV testing and counselling in Tanzania.

High-level leadership has played a critical role in combating stigma in Tanzania. The decision of Tanzanian President Kikwete and his wife to be publicly tested led to an increase in voluntary testing, and the Advisory Group encourages all MPs to take a public test.

Tanzanian MPs exercise leadership both nationally and on the ground in their constituencies, by involving local authorities in advocacy efforts and action. By working directly with stigmatized groups such as

injecting drug users, supporting AIDS orphans and giving civil society a voice during the drafting of the HIV Bill, Tanzanian MPs contributed to changing attitudes to HIV/AIDS.

The Advisory Group praises current efforts by Tanzanian MPs to remove HIV transmission from the list of criminal offences under Tanzanian law.

For an HIV response to be effective, it is crucial that all MPs, as was the case of the Tanzanian MPs, engage with NGOs, people living with HIV and most affected groups such as women and young people and support their advocacy efforts.

But stigma and denial are still widespread in Tanzania, and prevention campaigns are not going far enough. Parliamentarians around the world should further raise awareness on how social and cultural practices influence the spread of HIV and can stand in the way of effective prevention messages, and how proper treatment can offer a normal, productive life to people living with HIV.

Tanzania's AIDS legislation a model for the whole region

The Tanzanian HIV and AIDS (Prevention and Control) Act, adopted in 2008, offers strong guarantees for access to antiretroviral treatment and protection of the human rights of people living with HIV. It greatly inspired the recently adopted East African Community HIV and AIDS Prevention and Management Bill.



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HIV-positive mothers with their HIV-negative children at Temeke Hospital, Tanzania.



A former injecting drug user gives testimony to the Advisory Group.

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Members of the IPU Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS and members of TAPAC with the Vice-President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Mr. Mohammed Gharib Bilal.

Ensuring adequate funding

In addition to increasing the national AIDS budget, Tanzanian MPs, through the TAPAC coalition, managed to raise funds for HIV projects in the field to support NGOs, people living with HIV and most affected groups. However, with a general decrease of government and donor contributions towards HIV activities, future funding of this kind remains uncertain.

The Advisory Group urges parliaments around the world to use their full oversight powers to ensure that adequate funding is available for national HIV/AIDS strategies and programmes, including support to civil society.

Keeping track of lessons learned

Unfortunately, very little has been recorded about the concrete steps Tanzanian MPs took to achieve such impressive results in the fight against HIV/AIDS at the national level.

The Advisory Group urges TAPAC to find means to keep track of each of their activities along the way and their outcomes. This is of vital importance to share their experience with other MPs around the world and make sure good practices are collected and successful actions replicated in other countries.

As a first step to help parliamentarians organize themselves into cross-party groups and involve civil society in meeting the HIV challenge, the Advisory Group developed the guide “Raising the Profile of HIV and AIDS in Your Parliament” that was officially launched during the visit, at an event hosted by the Tanzanian Parliament.

The Advisory Group and the IPU as a whole will continue to foster parliamentary dialogue and exchange on the issue of HIV/AIDS and to link MPs and parliamentary groups and bodies working on HIV/AIDS.

Participants to the visit: Members of the Advisory Group: Hon. Marleen Temmerman (Belgium, Chair), Hon. Mohsen El-Hamzi (Saudi Arabia, Vice-Chair), Hon. Lediana Mafuru Mng'ong'o (United Republic of Tanzania), Hon. Somaya Al-Jowder (Bahrain), Hon. Thabitha Khumalo (Zimbabwe). Accompanying MPs: Hon. F. Outa (Kenya) and Hon. B. Goqwana (South Africa). IPU Secretariat: Aleksandra Blagojevic, Secretary of the Advisory Group. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria: Svend Robinson.

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Just a few years ago, Tanzanian MPs would have been ashamed to be seen anywhere near an HIV-positive person because of irrational fears and prejudices surrounding the disease. Now 75 per cent of MPs are working hand in hand with people infected and affected by HIV. We are proud to share our experience and see our relentless work rewarded internationally. It comforts us in our daily struggle and strengthens our legitimacy and our actions. We will remain true to our role as an example for the rest of the world.

Hon. Lediana Mafuru Mng'ong'o, Chair of the Tanzanian Parliamentarians AIDS Coalition

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Created in 1889, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is the international organization that brings together the representatives of parliaments of States. The IPU is the focal point for world-wide parliamentary dialogue and works for peace and cooperation among peoples with a view to strengthening representative institutions.

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