

Workshop 3

Sexual & Reproductive Health Rights & HIV/AIDS & Other Communicable Diseases

Title of Presentation: Discrimination and
issues faced by HIV positive women on
reproductive health rights in Botswana

BY: Kenole M. Leinatsela

Bomme Isago Association- Botswana.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS OF HIV POSITIVE WOMEN.

The video that I just played happened 5 years ago, and today we still have the same problem.

Women are been blamed for the spread of the virus in Botswana.

Some networks are still making HIV + people to sign employment contracts that says they cannot be pregnant while still working on their projects.

- HIV positive women are subject to degrading and discriminatory treatment, causing blame, despair, isolation, shame and leading to little or restricted freedom of choice in all areas of life.
- Moreover, gender inequalities in all areas of life increase the abuse of sexual and reproductive rights, as well as legal rights.
- Women's unequal social, economic and legal status is increased by a positive HIV status [the community see us as people having supernatural powers than HIV negative women]

Violations of reproductive health rights faced by HIV + women

- Not being allowed the freedom to decide to have /not to have children', or to decide on the number and spacing of children.

Younger women with HIV, in particular who do not have children when they are diagnosed, often want to try for a family. However they face pressure from health care providers not to have children and are not given sufficient information about reducing mother to child transmission.

Women who do not want to have children face pressure by family members to have a family, or are unable to negotiate contraceptive use with their partners.

- HIV + women are also often unable to decide freely on how to rear their children. For example, if we or another family member becomes ill, we may have to withdraw the girl child from school to help with chores in the home or income generation.
- Violation of the sexual right of women to decide when, how and with whom we have sex, often leave us unable to protect ourselves from HIV or indeed to protect our health and well being once we have HIV.
- Marriage is often a source of social and economic status security for most women, but rape in marriage is not considered legal in Botswana, and many women still believe that sex on demand within marriage is a man 's right.
- Women who refuse sex or try to negotiate condom use are frequently accused of being unfaithful and are physically abused. Example, some husbands will leave these women for another woman who will oblige to his demands and in a way spreading the virus].

Action Plan

- We cannot exert our sexual and reproductive rights if our economic, legal and political rights are still been violated. We now call for the rights of HIV + women in Botswana and other countries to be transformed into action:
- The right to safe termination of pregnancy, and the right not to be forced into termination of pregnancy or sterilization
- The right to protected sex
- The right to reproduce and have children including safe conception, safe pregnancy and safe outcome of pregnancy
- The right to sexuality education in and out of school
- The right to choose our sexual partners
- The right to sexual pleasure

In conclusion, all HIV positive women are special human beings, we are grandmothers, mothers, sisters, aunts and each one of us deserves to be treated with respect, love and dignity in all phases of our lives.