

The Role of Public Representatives and Legislatures in Strengthening HIV and AIDS Prevention Strategies: The Case of South Africa

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Abstract : Both Public Representatives and Legislatures have an imperative role towards strengthening interventions to reduce and cease Sexual Transmitted Infections (STIs) specifically the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). Scaling-up constituency work in support of interventions earmarked for mitigating the compromising socio-economic impacts of advanced HIV is extremely essential. Though the antiretroviral treatment (ART) has saved million lives that would have perished without it, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (2012) states that more efforts should be redirected to prevention strategies to close the tap of new infections. It is against this backdrop that Legislatures as law making institutions have undisputed role to play in HIV alleviation because of the position they occupy in the society. Furthermore, Public Representatives are arguably idolised by young people for the role they play hence it is incumbent upon them to use their moral and political responsibility to aid the interventions for HIV prevention (Inter-Parliamentary Union, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS & United Nations Development Programme, 2007). Moreover, the continuous HIV infection and its devastating effects specifically in Southern African region has brought closer the disease to public representatives and demanded calculated interventions warranting both public representatives and legislatures to be more visible in various ways such as taking HIV counselling and testing publicly, oversight, reducing stigma and discrimination, partnering with civil society organisations (CSOs) and facilitating debates on HIV across parliamentary and social platforms. The effects of advanced HIV yearn for public representatives to be seen, accessed, felt, engaged, partnered and lobbied for pro-human rights legislations and ideal oversight to coerce the executive to deliver on their core responsibilities like providing basic services to the electorates (AIDS Law Project (2003). The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (2004) assert that the omission of Public Representatives and Legislatures in the HIV prevention agenda is a serious deficiency in the fight against HIV and AIDS. In light of this, this paper argues the innovative and legislative ways in which both the Public Representative and the Legislatures should play in HIV prevention.

Keywords : legislature, public representative, oversight, HIV and AIDS, constituency, service delivery

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