When HIV collided with COVID-19 in Zimbabwe: Some emerging lessons to inform pragmatic actions to protect HIV prevention gains

Dr. Bernard Madzima
CEO, National AIDS Council of Zimbabwe
Strategic positioning and actions (1)

• Recognise precious (yet fragile) HIV prevention gains in need of protection
  • Even with a 44% decline in new HIV infections between 2010 and 2019, country off course to achieve the 75% Fast-Track target by 2020.
  • COVID-19 risked

• HIV strategically positioned in the national Covid-19 preparedness and response plan
  • HIV as a core part of the national COVID-19 strategy
    • Heightened vulnerability of PLHIV
    • Deleterious impacts of service disruptions

• Rapid adaptation: Same purpose, adapted program
  • GoZ issued “Rapid guidance on HIV service delivery in COVID-19 context”
Strategic positioning and actions (2)

• Rapidly pivoting: Repurpose HIV investments
  • Leveraged domestic resources ZWL 20 million for information education and communication as well as PPE for communities and health workers
  • Mobilize transportation of ARVs to local areas to ensure easy access by PLHIV
  • Incorporated CoVID into all community HIV prevention programmes

• Keeping the tabs on
  • A rapid community survey of impacts
    • MoHCC led a rapid assessment of impacts on HIV programs
  • NAC as member of core modelling group
    • Spotlight on risks and effects of service disruptions on national HIV response
  • A HIV sub-pillar of the COVID-19 response
  • A 24-hour call center, in partnership with ZNNP+ and UNAIDS, to address structural issues
COVID-19 impact on HIV prevention services provision

• Monthly PrEP new initiations
Strategic positioning and actions (3)

• High-level advocacy makes a difference
  - The First Lady as a Champion

• Also, Champions for HIV from within matter:
  - VP is Minister of Health & Child Care
  - Minister of Finance, formerly HIV researcher (RethinkHIV), championed safety nets
    - Placed social protection high on agenda