Traditional Leaders Taking the Lead!

Booklet for Traditional Leaders Working to Prevent HIV and Gender-Based Violence in their Communities
Traditional Leaders Taking the Lead!


SAF AIDS, 2011
Introduction to Your “From Past to Future” Reference Manual

Why should we Support Traditional Leaders?
Southern Africa HIV and AIDS Information Dissemination Service (SAfAIDS) ‘Changing the River’s Flow’ programme successfully used an approach to HIV prevention that addressed women’s rights, prevention of gender-based violence (GBV) and cultural practices in seven countries in southern Africa. From implementation of this programme, the organisation has learnt that the success of HIV and GBV programmes in communities happens when we work together with Traditional Leadership structures at every step!

Why ‘From Past to Future’?
The ‘From Past to Future’ is an approach built on drawing from past experiences and lessons learnt and using them to plan for and take action in the future. This means recognising the important role of our culture as we work to prevent HIV and gender based violence and protect the rights of community members to safety and health.

This forward movement of tradition includes:
- identifying and promoting practices that are protective
- modifying those practices that place individuals at risk of HIV infection or violence

SAfAIDS, along with their partners, continue to support Traditional Leaders with materials and information so they can effectively help to reduce community member’s vulnerability and risk to HIV and GBV.

Who Is This Reference Manual For?
This Reference Manual is for use by Traditional Leaders to have important facts and information so they know:
- How to become Champions in HIV Prevention and Support
- How to help end gender based violence by making culture ‘Our Shelter & Rock’
- How to promote the rights of women and girls
- How to ‘Take the Lead’ on HIV and GBV issues in their communities

“When your neighbour’s horse falls into a pit, you should not rejoice at it, for your own child may fall into it too.” – African Proverb

Protecting others means Protecting ourselves and our Future!
Important terms for you to Remember

**Abstinence** - not having sexual intercourse with anyone.

**AIDS** stands for Acquired (something you are not born with) Immune Deficiency (body’s immune systems is weakened) Syndrome (a group of health problems that make up a disease) – this is the name for a group of illnesses in HIV positive people that result when the body is no longer able to fight off infection because of damage caused to the immune system.

**Antiretroviral medicines (ARVs)** medicines taken by people living with HIV (PLHIV) to help stop HIV from replicating and making the immune system weak.

**Antiretroviral Therapy (ART)**, a combination of ARV drugs given in the correct way and taken in the correct way at the right time.

**Basic counselling** is a one-on-one confidential discussion which aims to help people cope better with situations they are facing. This is done by helping people better understand their emotions and feelings and help them make positive choices and decisions.

**Community readiness** means helping your community to get ready to address issues that affect them, including HIV, GBV and the rights of women and girls.

**Custodians of culture** – those individuals, such as Traditional Leaders, who have been trusted to hold and transmit important knowledge about traditions and culture which are passed on from generation to generation.

**Culture** - our behaviour in groups, such as families, communities and countries which acts like a guide to shape our attitudes, beliefs and behaviour. Culture is passed on from generation to generation and can change over time.

**Discordant couple** - where one partner is HIV positive and the other is HIV negative.

**Gender based violence (GBV)** - violence based on a person’s gender, when a man or woman hurts another person through beating, rape or scolding with words that hurt the other person, or not giving them money, property or food. Refusing one parent to see their children or parents is also a form of GBV.

**HIV** stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus – this is the virus that causes AIDS by attacking the body’s defence against disease, the immune system.

**HIV counselling and testing (HCT)**, also called voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) are services that help people to know their HIV status and provide pre- and post-test counselling.

**Human rights** can be thought of as the basics of life – the things that every human being should have regardless of whether they are a man or woman, adult or child, no matter what their culture, religion or background

**Immune system** - the system in the body that protects the body from disease and infection. HIV positive people have a weakened immune system.

**Intergenerational sex** - sexual relationships between a young person, male or female, and an older person (ten years older or more). The risk is that the older partners have often had more sex partners in their lifetime, increasing their risk of contracting HIV, which they can then transmit to their younger partner.
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Medical Male Circumcision (MMC) - the removal of the entire foreskin of the penis in a sterile setting. MMC contributes to HIV prevention.

Mother-to-child transmission - HIV infected mothers passing the infection to their children during pregnancy, childbirth or after delivery through breastfeeding.

Multiple concurrent partnerships (MCPs) - overlapping sexual partners where sexual intercourse with one partner occurs between two acts of intercourse with another partner.

Opportunistic infections - infections that take advantage of the body's weakened state to make people sick and can include tuberculosis (TB), diarrhoea and pneumonia, among others.

Peace building means helping communities, neighbours or family members to move forward together again after an episode of conflict. It is a process and not an event. Peace building attempts to resolve conflict and bring acceptable solutions for everyone in the community or family.

PLHIV - People living with HIV - can be infected people, or family or friends affected by HIV in the home and community.

Prevention of parent to child transmission (PPTCT) - also called prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT) - programmes that aim to reduce the risk of HIV transmission from a mother to her baby during pregnancy, delivery or breastfeeding.

Sexual and reproductive health rights are the rights of all individuals to control and safeguard their own bodies and enjoy satisfying and safe sex.

Traditional forums – settings used by Traditional Leaders to address issues with their community. These may include traditional ceremonies, rites of passage and rituals (birth and initiation, courtship and marriage, court systems, seasonal ceremonies, spirits or ancestors), among others.

Traditional practices, or 'cultural practices' are the "things we do" because of what we believe in. They can involve everything from the way children are raised to the way ceremonies such as weddings and funerals are conducted.
Important Role of Traditional Leaders in Responding to HIV and Gender Based Violence

What is the Role of Traditional Leaders?
Traditional Leaders play very important roles in their communities. They are:
- custodians of culture
- gatekeepers
- trusted sources of information
- providers of moral and cultural guidance
- peace builders
- local capacity builders

More than any other leader in our communities, Traditional Leaders have a unique and important role to play in promoting the rights of women and girls, and preventing HIV and GBV!

Traditional Leaders know about:
- Problems of today which community members face that might place them at risk
- Community history that might be influencing behaviour and beliefs
- Traditional practices and methods of communication that might help community members to understand and appreciate information

Traditional Leaders may be the only ones in their community who:
- Have the power or authority to change cultural practices which might be putting community members at risk of contracting HIV or experiencing GBV
- Know about positive traditional practices and values that can protect the community

“A leopard licks its spots, black and white.” – Zulu proverb

As Traditional Leaders you have the responsibility to protect ALL – women, men and children - not just a few selected ones, in your community!
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Importance of Our Traditional Practices and Values

Traditional Leaders play a very important role in maintaining culture and providing guidance on tradition within their communities.

Culture and traditional practices are the foundation of every decision we make, and show us that we live what we believe.

Issues about HIV, gender based violence and the rights of women and girls can not be dealt with, unless we consider culture.

There is no such thing as ‘bad’ or ‘good’ traditional practices!

Traditional Leaders know that:
- All practices served a purpose in the community at some point.
- The world is changing, and with the HIV and GBV epidemics some of these practices that once helped the community may now be harmful to certain groups, among them women and girls.

Some protective traditional practices have been forgotten and lost, and they need to be revived to protect those at risk of violence and HIV infection.
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Let us Explore Positive and Protective Traditional Practices

Culture gives us:

- Strong moral tradition
- Traditional communication methods that people can relate to
- Learning from the past, and linking our present with our community history/ancestors
- High regard for the status of women and girls
- Respect for elders
- Collective communities working together for the benefit of all – not just one individual
- Guidance on the role of different levels of family in guiding youth (among them grandparents, mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, cousins)
- Opportunity to have men involved in the lives of their children and as protectors of the household
- The important role of traditional ceremonies and rituals for providing information and guidance to community members

“People listen to Kings and Cultural Leaders. We had missed this point in the fight against HIV and AIDS. Cultural Leaders should appeal to the people to modify behaviour and save lives.” - Dr. Stephen Mallinga, Ugandan Minister of Health

Let’s Explore: Possibly Outdated or Harmful Practices

Some practices can be harmful and create risk of violence or HIV infection:

- Having many sexual partners without being open about it e.g small houses
- Child pledging or spirit appeasement
- Intergenerational sex (when there is a gap of 10 or more years between sexual partners) - including ‘sugar daddies’
- Sexual practices such as dry sex and virginity testing
- Early/forced marriage/female abduction
- Seclusion of young women for traditional roles and customs - resulting in their removal from school and isolation from family
- Traditional male circumcision rituals
- Sexual cleansing rites
- Wife inheritance, wife exchange, wife sharing, widow cleansing
- Female genital mutilation
- Sexual death cleansing
- A man’s right to woman’s body after paying bride-price or lobola
- Male dominance in the household including:
  - Men in control of money in the home
  - Culture of silence regarding sex in marriage
  - Women’s role to please and satisfy husband sexually at all times
  - Women’s inability to negotiate or refuse sex
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Traditional Leaders as Champions in HIV Prevention

Traditional Leaders are key players in HIV awareness, prevention, and in supporting treatment and care!

What should Traditional Leaders Know About HIV?

- HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus - this is the virus that causes AIDS by attacking the body’s defence against disease, the immune system.

- Once HIV makes the body weak, people become weak and are more prone to getting other infections and diseases. These ‘opportunistic infections’ take advantage of the body’s weakened state to make people sick and can include tuberculosis (TB).

- HIV can be transmitted from person to person through contact with infected blood, vaginal fluids, semen and breast milk. Three main ways for HIV infection are:
  1. **Unprotected sexual contact** – unprotected vaginal, oral or anal sex. The presence of other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) increases the chance of HIV infection.
  2. **Blood transmission** – HIV infected blood getting into the body through open wounds, sharing of contaminated needles or other sharp objects (razors).
  3. **Mother-to-child transmission** – HIV infected mothers can pass HIV to their children during pregnancy, childbirth or after delivery through breastfeeding.

- There is NO CURE yet available for HIV, but HIV can be prevented and treated.

- People living with HIV (PLHIV) can take medicines called Antiretroviral medicines (ARVs) which are used to help stop HIV from replicating and making the immune system weak.

- AIDS stands for Acquired (something you are not born with) Immune Deficiency (body’s immune systems is weakened) Syndrome (a group of health problems that make up a disease) – this is the name for a group of illnesses in HIV positive people when their body is no longer able to fight off infection because of a weak immune system.

- With effective antiretroviral therapy (ART), where ARV medicines are taken in the correct way and at the right time, PLHIV can live normal and healthy lives.

“*Medicine left in the bottle can’t help.*” - African proverb

When we have the information – we need to share it with others and take action to protect them!
Who is most affected by HIV in our communities?

- In southern Africa, **young people** between the ages of 20 and 29 years have the highest risk of HIV infection.
- **Young women** are most affected by HIV, and in some instances are at four times more risk of becoming infected as compared to young men in the same age group.
- Who is most affected in your community?

What Should Traditional Leaders Know About HIV Prevention?

There are many things Traditional Leaders can do to promote HIV prevention in their communities!

Did you know that HIV Prevention is not just about preventing new HIV infections in HIV negative people?

It is also about assisting people living with HIV to protect themselves from becoming re-infected, or from passing HIV on to others – this is called “positive prevention”.

Which **methods of HIV prevention** do you feel are important to address in your community?

- Practice abstinence and masturbation
- Use condoms correctly and creatively
- Use prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT) services
- Access voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) services
- Know the risks about intergenerational sex
- Access medical male circumcision (MMC) services if you are a man, avoid multiple concurrent partnerships (MCPs) and strive for faithfulness
- Other safe sex methods

**A culture positive approach to HIV prevention** in your community might include:

- The use of prevention messages that focus on group and family norms
- Building on traditional social assets to the support of PLHIV, such as community and family support structures.
- Using traditional values to help address modern problems contributing to HIV in the communities (for example, ‘the sugar daddy syndrome’ or alcohol and drug abuse).
- Using cultural rituals and rites of passage as unique opportunities for Traditional Leaders to address issues related to HIV in their community.
- Developing culturally acceptable alternatives and solutions to harmful or risky practices.
Myths and misconceptions are beliefs about a situation or activity, when they are actually not true. Examples of myths and misconceptions are:

- “one can get HIV from sharing toilets with a person living with HIV” This is not true!
- “a mosquito can give you HIV if it bites you after biting an HIV positive person before” This is not true!
- “now that I am on HIV medicines (ARVs) I can have sex without a condom as I am treated” This is not true!

Myths and misconceptions place people in danger of HIV infection or re-infection, as well as creating obstacles for PLHIV to receive the treatment and support they need.

A very important role of Traditional Leaders is to address and correct myths and misconceptions about HIV in their communities as in some instances they may be the only ones with the authority to address sensitive cultural issues.

The following statements are TRUE but does everyone know this in your community?

- One can NOT be cured of HIV through having sex with a virgin.
- One can NOT tell by looking when someone has HIV and every person who loses weight does NOT have AIDS.
- There is NO known cure for HIV. While traditional healers may assist to manage the symptoms of HIV, there is no evidence that a traditional healer has cured HIV.
- HIV is NOT a plague sent by God to non-believers or immoral people. Religious leaders and devout followers also get infected with HIV!
- Knowing your HIV status is NOT a death sentence. HIV treatment has improved very much and PLHIV live long, active and healthy lives. The fastest way to fall ill from HIV is to not to know your status, because then you are not able to take steps to protect yourself, or access treatment and care!
- PLHIV should NOT be spared any love or affection because of their status. You can NOT get HIV from hugging, kissing and sharing meals with PLHIV.
- Masturbating will NOT make one blind or impotent and is a safe sex practice
- Condoms does NOT make sex any less exciting and satisfying.

“"A weapon which you don’t have in your hand won’t kill a snake."” - African proverb

Learn more about HIV and violence so you can take action to prevent it!
Traditional Leaders Helping to End Gender Based Violence

What is Gender Based Violence?

Gender Based Violence (GBV) is violence based on a person’s gender, when a man or woman hurts another person through beating, rape or scolding with words that hurt the other person, or not giving them money, property or food. Refusing one parent to see their children or parents is also a form of GBV.

Violence of any form involves the abuse of power by someone who holds the power over someone who is less powerful. In GBV we can see this power may be:
- **economic** - with the person who holds the money
- **physical** - physically stronger
- **cultural** - ideas about what are acceptable roles and behaviours for women and men

As custodians of culture a very important role of Traditional Leaders in ending GBV in their communities is exploring and understanding the role which culture plays in violence.

Gender based violence can take four different forms
1. **Physical** – hurting the body
2. **Emotional and verbal** – hurting feelings or self-worth
3. **Sexual** – forced/coerced sex, unwanted sexual touching or fondling
4. **Economic** – control over money

Traditional Leaders can help end GBV by creating Zero Tolerance for violent behaviour in their communities!

Zero tolerance means no excuses for violent behaviour in our communities!
- “I was under the influence (drunk)”. Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol are NOT acceptable excuses for violent behaviour of any kind.
- “My mother/father behaved this way, so this is what I have been taught”. Just as violent behaviours can be learned by people who grow up in a violent household, they can also be unlearned.
- “It is part of my culture”. Some say GBV is more related to the loss of cultural values, family values and traditions. Do you feel this is true in your community?

“To stay a long time in the water does not make you clean.” - African Proverb

Staying in the same situation without any change does not mean we are staying safe – we need to change to suit the needs of our times!
How Does GBV Harm My Community?

The biggest dangers linked to GBV are:
1. GBV increases risk of **HIV infection**. How? During rape or forced sex, it is common to be unable to negotiate for safer sex; people may need to engage in risky sexual behaviours for economic security; violence against PLHIV whose status is discovered/who disclose their status.
2. **Injury or death** from GBV.

**Gender based violence is harmful to the entire community, not just the victims or survivors of violence!**

Those harmed by GBV in a community include the:
- **Person being abused** – injuries caused; increased risk of HIV infection, feelings of humiliation and shame, fear, isolation, withdrawal.
- **Children in the home** – How are they harmed? – may be targeted for abuse, witnessing abuse may be causing psychological distress, may take on violent behaviours and begin using violence as a means of dealing with problems with their peers, or within their own families in the future; increases the likelihood of sexual risk-taking when reaching maturity, increasing their risk of contracting HIV.
- **Person who is abusing others** – increased risk of HIV infection, guilt and unhappiness, lack of peace, risk of imprisonment.
- **Other community members** – extended family members are distressed at knowledge/suspicion of violence; teachers, other students and community members in dealing with children from abusive families, members of the congregation or neighbours unsure of how to act; loss of respect for family of abuser, affecting social standing; disruption of community life.

**Abuse is not the same as discipline!**

With abuse, unlike other forms of discipline, the following elements are present:

**Unpredictability** – no clear boundaries or rules regarding what will result in an assault.

**Lashing out in anger** – abuse is often the result of adults acting out in anger rather than trying to teach for the wellbeing of the child

**Using fear to control behaviour** – abusers may argue that abuse is used to keep ‘children in line’, but all the child is learning is how to avoid being hit, not how to grow and learn to behave well and cope with their own emotions.

*“War is not porridge” and “It is better to be loved than feared”* – African Proverbs

**Violence cannot bring any development, growth or health to those involved**
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What is the Role of Traditional Leaders in Responding to Abuse in their Communities?

The most important role of Traditional Leaders will be in spreading the message of Zero Tolerance for GBV in their communities, and in the effective referral of community members to social services, hospital, or the police in cases of reported or suspected abuse.

Traditional Forums for addressing GBV (such as traditional courts, counselling and guidance provided by Traditional Leaders, or community meetings) can be important tools for:
- resolving conflicts before they turn into abusive situations
- peace building at household and community level
- developing a culture of Zero Tolerance for violence in the community

Remember that GBV is a criminal act and must be reported to local police 100% of the time!

It is important that Traditional Leaders form contacts and links with people and services in the community which can help them to prevent GBV and support survivors.

Traditional Leaders Preventing GBV in their Communities

Traditional Leaders have a very important role to play in speaking out against GBV and creating a culture of zero tolerance for violence.

The best way to end GBV in your community is to prevent it from happening in the first place!

Things Traditional Leaders can do to help prevent GBV include:
- Acting as role models for community members and living by their own message of non-violence.
- Holding men (or women) accountable for their decisions and actions – no excuses for violence!
- Emphasising the role of men as protectors.
- Getting the message out about ‘zero tolerance for violence’. At community gatherings, traditional ceremonies and rites, Traditional Leaders can talk about Gender Based Violence.
Traditional Leaders Promoting the Rights of Women and Girls

What are ‘Rights’? Exploring Basic Human Rights and Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights

People use the term ‘human rights’ often, but it is not often explained what ‘rights’ are.

**Human rights** are the **basics of life** – the things that every human being should have whether they are a man or woman, adult or child, no matter their religion or background.

These rights have been put into laws and conventions, like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, by world leaders and state that all people should:

- Be born **free and equal**
- Be entitled to rights **without discrimination** on the basis of their race, sex, religion or political opinions
- Have the **right to life** and to protect their body, the right to privacy, and the right to marry and have a family if both spouses consent to this
- Have the right to have a **standard of living** that allows them to be healthy, have clean water, food and shelter.

**Promoting the rights of women and girls means trying to ensure that women, men, boys and girls equally enjoy opportunities and life!**

Rights are not meant to give women more power over men or to try and make women ‘the same’ as men. They are meant to respect the unique roles of both women and men, and give extra support in areas where their differences may create different needs.

**Sexual and reproductive health rights** are the rights of all individuals to control and safeguard their own bodies and enjoy satisfying and safe sex.

Sexual and reproductive health rights include the rights of couples and individuals to:

1. Decide freely and responsibly on the **number, spacing and timing of their children**
2. Have access to **information and education** on their sexual and reproductive health
3. Attain the **highest standard of sexual and reproductive health** possible, inclusive of treatment for STIs, access to contraception, and safe pregnancy and childbirth

Make decisions about sex and reproduction **free of discrimination, coercion and violence**.

**Did you know, people living with HIV** have the same right to have children and lead a healthy and satisfying sex life, free of discrimination and violence, same as those who are not infected?
Culture as Our Shelter, Preventing HIV and GBV and Promoting the Rights of Women and Girls

Culture as Our Shelter

Culture, HIV, GBV and the rights of women and girls are each related to the other in a way that can act to:
- **PROTECT** people - from HIV infection or re-infection, exposure to GBV or the violation of their rights.
- Put people as **RISK** - of HIV infection or re-infection, of experiencing gender-based violence or of having their rights violated.

Culture can act as a shelter or expose us to the elements that might put people in our communities at risk from HIV, GBV or the violation of the rights of women and girls.

This important role of culture emphasises the important role of Traditional Leaders as custodians of culture in addressing these issues in their communities.

Ensuring Our Men Are Protectors and Are Protected

The traditional role of men as protectors and involved fathers and husbands in their homes is an area which some Traditional Leaders have noted has weakened in their communities during recent times.

Men not acting as protectors may increase risky behaviours, leading to their not taking responsibility for the wellbeing of their families, which could place everyone at increased risk from HIV and GBV!

Examples of how men in the community can create risk of HIV infection and violence against women:
- Having multiple concurrent partnerships (MCPs) or extra-marital sexual relationships (‘small houses’ or ‘spare tires’) without their main partner’s/wife’s knowledge
- Not bringing back money earned into the household for the benefit of all the family
- Increased intake of alcohol or drugs among men, leading to unhealthy behaviours, such as unsafe sex or violence
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- Refusing to use condoms with their wives or girlfriends even though they are having affairs or refusing to listen when their wives or girlfriends negotiate for safer sex

- Being given extra status or seen as ‘macho’ for having many sexual partners, whether a young man, in a relationship or married.

Encouraging men to take on their role as protectors is an important area where Traditional Leaders can use positive culture to decrease risk of HIV and GBV!

Men also need to be protected and supported in order to prevent HIV and GBV in our communities. This can be done in your community by:

- Providing information on medical male circumcision as a way for men to prevent HIV infection or re-infection.

- Identifying and overcoming barriers to men’s sexual and reproductive health
  - Cultural - men discouraged from appearing ‘weak’
  - Economic - men needing to travel for work, financial stress
  - Physical - knowing about symptoms and available treatment for sexually transmitted infections, including HIV

- Educating men about the risks of multiple concurrent partnerships and the need to protect themselves and their partners.

- Campaigns to reduce peer pressure to engage in unhealthy behaviours such as drinking or drug taking, ‘picking up’ girls when going out with friends, and placing high value on healthy behaviours.
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CULTURE

- Traditional norms and practices – are they protective or harmful?
- Guidance, involvement and example of Traditional Leaders in:
  - Promoting positive and protective practices
  - Developing acceptable alternatives to practices which are harmful

Gender Based Violence

Is there a ‘culture’ of Zero Tolerance for violence?

How does GBV put certain people at risk for HIV?

Rights of Women and Girls

Are access to basic human rights, SRHR and services and behaviours that will protect us from GBV or HIV equal for all?

HIV

How do tradition and culture influence the:
- Ability of women to negotiate for safer sex,
- Economic dependence of women on men, or
- Ability to find out about HIV status or seek treatment and support if HIV positive?

Weakness in any area creates fertile ground for HIV and GBV in our communities.
CULTURE should be our shelter!
Traditional Leaders ‘Taking the Lead’ on HIV, GBV and Protecting the Rights of Women and Girls

Is Your Community Ready?

Community readiness means helping your community get ready to address issues of HIV, GBV and the rights of women and girls.

Traditional Leaders can get ready by:

- Be aware of services available to assist community members – this means knowing where to refer if needed.

- Getting the message out – for shared responsibility on issues of HIV, GBV and the rights of women and girls

- Identifying barriers people may face – people might not be able to help themselves because of certain problems. These might include:
  - Cultural – are people ready or willing to make the changes they need?
  - Stigma based – stigma and discrimination against women, girls and PLHIV are deeply rooted in some societies and will need to be addressed if the efforts of Traditional Leaders are going to be effective.
  - Related to poverty or insecurity – those unable to meet their own basic needs such as adequate food, shelter, or basic education may need to engage in risky behaviours for survival
  - Other barriers that may exist in your community? These will be unique to every community and Traditional Leaders are encouraged to explore and problem solve these.

HIV, GBV and the rights of women and girls are not ‘their’ problem or ‘his or her’ problem - these issues are YOUR problem and OUR problem because the health and happiness of our community and future depends on how well we deal with them!
Increase YOUR Power by Taking the Lead!

Addressing HIV, GBV and promoting the rights of women and girls will not only result in benefits for your community members, but increase your own power and legitimacy!

Traditional Leaders will benefit by Taking the Lead! by increasing their status:
- in the eyes of the community you lead – for addressing issues that are important to them and showing that you are a leader who cares.
- in the eyes of others – such as community based organisations, local government and others as an involved and dedicated leader and a ‘partner’ in the health and happiness of your community!

Good Luck and Keep Going!

Your efforts in your communities with information and tools for action related to HIV, GBV and promoting the rights of women and girls will not end here!

Traditional Leaders can consider this the beginning of an exciting new chapter in their efforts to prevent HIV, GBV and promote the rights of women and girls in your community!

Part of making use of this training will also be to share YOUR experiences and lessons learned with others!

The next few pages will provide you with some case studies, or examples of Traditional Leaders in Africa who have already taken action on issues related to HIV, GBV and promoting the rights of women and girls.

Will you be the next Traditional Leader to become recognised for your work?

Be a Traditional Leader who Takes the Lead! Help prevent HIV, GBV and promote the rights of women and girls for a Happy and Healthy Community for all!
Case Studies for Traditional Leaders

Case Study 1: Using Traditional Culture to Approach Discussions on Gender
Concept of Ubuntu and the House of Traditional Leaders: Limpopo, South Africa

Rather than taking an individual, commonly Western, approach to discussions about gender with the House of Traditional Leaders in the Limpopo Province of South Africa, the Sonke Gender Justice Network bases its approach with Traditional Leaders on the African concept of ubuntu.

Ubuntu is the idea that “a person is a person through other persons”.

This idea of the inter-relatedness of every person is important to many African communities’ understanding of all issues, including those that are related to gender.

Is there a similar concept to ubuntu used in your culture or area?

Case Study 2: Traditional Leaders Taking the Lead to Change Practices Which Put People at Risk of HIV Infection
Wife Inheritance and Arranged Marriages: Seke, Zimbabwe

Traditional Leaders from this community have discussed how wife inheritance and arranged marriages may be placing people at risk of HIV infection, or the violation of their rights. This is particularly true in the cases of forced marriage involving young girls.

These leaders have suggested that as a result of a directive from the presiding Chief, Traditional Leaders should advise their community members to:
- Ensure free choice by all partners before entering into marriage
- Encourage HIV testing for BOTH partners before marriage
…in all situations, but especially when the marriage is being arranged by families, when one partner has died or a young woman is involved!

The solutions proposed by Leaders in Seke show us how, through innovative and intelligent thinking, Traditional Leaders have the power to promote the rights of women and girls and prevent HIV and GBV by developing acceptable alternatives to harmful cultural practices for people who wish to continue practicing them.

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Case Study 3: Traditional Leaders Taking the Lead in HIV Prevention
Examples from Across Africa

Traditional Leaders taking a leading role in HIV prevention activities in their community is nothing new. These are just a few examples of how Traditional Leaders have used their positions of authority and respect to take the lead on HIV prevention in their communities.

Condom Use: In South Africa, Traditional Leaders have shown their strength on HIV prevention issues by supporting and attending public demonstrations on condom use.

HIV Testing: In Botswana a chief and 30 tribal leaders openly underwent HIV testing during an open voluntary counselling and testing day in their community to help reduce stigma. The chief explained that he participated in the hope that being open about having an HIV test would encourage other men to know their status.

Pledge to Act as Community Role Models: In Uganda, Traditional Leaders made a Declaration in which they pledged to live as community role models for HIV prevention, which included their commitment to addressing cultural barriers that prevent the promotion of HIV prevention and interventions such as the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, infant nutrition, safe medical male circumcision and the correct use of condoms.

HIV Community Mobilisation: National House of Traditional Leaders in South Africa trained Traditional Leaders in HIV Community Mobilisation, information and skills were then taken back to their communities. As an example of the potential of such activities, in just one month, three Traditional Leaders reached 576 people with prevention messages.

Case Study 4: Traditional Leaders Taking Action to Prevent GBV
Developing Slogans Against GBV, South Africa

Traditional Leaders have addressed GBV prevention in their communities by developing slogans at community level, in local languages.

Some of these include: “Violence against women is the work of cowards” “Real men are protectors” “We will not tolerate violence in our community”. These slogans can be spoken out loud or painted on banners in local languages to be displayed at traditional forums such as community gatherings, traditional ceremonies or places where rites of passage are performed.
Traditional Leaders Taking the Lead!

Case Study 5: Traditional Leaders Increasing the Leadership Profiles of Women and Girls in Their Communities
King Kgosi Mabe of South Africa and Chief Seke of Zimbabwe

These two Traditional Leaders have demonstrated their commitment to promoting the rights of women and girls in their communities by allowing for changes in the way in which traditional community discussions take place.

Both have allowed women and young girls to address crowds in their presence, something which would have previously been considered 'against protocol' for traditional gatherings.

Through their actions, these leaders have acknowledged that giving women leadership roles in their communities is an important step in achieving rights for all. These Traditional Leaders are not just lecturing about gender equality, but they are demonstrating how improvements can be made through their own actions.

Case Study 6: Organised Male Involvement for the Benefit of Communities
Padare/Enkundleni Men’s Forum on Gender, Zimbabwe

The goal of Padare, which includes the support of local Traditional Leaders such as headmen, is to provide a platform for men to confront and challenge stereotypes related to sexuality, masculinity and gender that negatively affect men, women, families and communities. The group derives its name, Padare, from the traditional male gathering where important community issues are discussed and key decisions made.

Padare’s activities include:
- Creating a forum for men to question and reject gender stereotypes and roles that privilege men and repress women
- Creating a support group for men who are committed to change
- Enabling men to identify and challenge structures and institutions creating or prolonging gender inequality
- Building a men’s movement to advocate and campaign for gender justice and the elimination of all forms of gender-based discrimination.

Padare shows how through traditional forums based upon the role of men as leaders and protectors including the involvement of Traditional Leaders, men are making a difference in their communities and openly addressing issues related to HIV, GBV and the equal rights for all.
Case Study 7: Traditional Leaders Increasing Their Power by Getting Involved: Traditional Authority Applied Research Network (TAARN): Ghana

The involvement of Traditional Leaders in Ghana on issues such as HIV and AIDS has demonstrated that such efforts do not only benefit the communities they lead, but actually increase the power held by Traditional Leaders in their communities and country.

“In a country such as Ghana, where the central government has realised that it cannot do without traditional leaders at the level of local government; where traditional leaders have taken it upon themselves to modernise the institution of chieftaincy to meet the needs of their people in today’s world; and where so-called ‘modernity’ has hit hard with new social, economic, and health problems, chiefs and queen mothers are regaining a lot of authority as partners in development.” – Christiane Owusu-Sarpong, member of TAARN Ghana team
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