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Slogan: Touching Minds and Hearts for Action and Change

REPORT ON THE POST ICASA FEEDBACK MEETING HELD ON 4TH FEBRAURY 2022.

NAME OF CBO: VISUAL ECHOES FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY (VEHRA)

VENUE: HOTEL OK SIR APPOLLO



PHOTO 1: The Executive Director VEHRA in attendance of the post ICASA feedback meeting.

PREPARED BY: Ntambi Eugene

SIGNATURE:..... DATE:

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REVIEWED BY:Kagwa Aggrey

SIGNATURE: **DATE:**

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ACTIVITY BACK GROUND

The International Conference On Aids And Sexually Transmitted Infections In Africa (Icasa) is a major bilingual international aids conference which takes place in africa. its current biennial hosting alternates between anglophone and francophone african countries.

The 21st Edition of ICASA (2021) was held both virtually, in- person or hybrid and all adequate dispositions were taken since the organizers monitored on a daily basis the trend of Covid-19 pandemic in the host country and in Africa at large.

The convening of the International Conference on AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections in Africa (ICASA 2021) in Durban ICC, South Africa in December 2021 represented a tremendous opportunity to highlight the diverse nature of the African region’s HIV epidemic and the unique response to it. In an inclusive context, according to the 2020 Global Fund COVID 19 Funding report, the emergence of the Corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic had a catastrophic impact on the most vulnerable communities around the world and threatened progress made in mitigating the impact of HIV, TB and malaria globally. Through grant savings and reprogramming of HIV, TB and malaria programs, over US\$500 million has been allocated to the COVID-19 Response Mechanism. As such, this creates a gap in the fight to mitigate the impacts on lifesaving HIV, TB and malaria programmes, leading to fragile health systems being overwhelmed. A disease like COVID-19 threatened us all. However, we must not relent in our goal for an AIDS free Africa. It is imperative for the continent to rely on the dynamics of recent scientific advances, on a plea that will respond to a mobilization of internal and endogenous resources. The biennial International AIDS Conference is the premier gathering for all working in the field of Health as well as leaders, people living with HIV and others committed to ending the epidemic. It was a tremendous opportunity for researchers, clinicians from around the world to share the latest scientific advances, learn from one another’s expertise, and develop strategies for advancing all facets of our collective efforts to end AIDS by 2030.

ICASA 2021 was organized with the government of South Africa which is committed to ensure that all conference delegates adhered to the Covid-19 safety and preventive protocols. The conference was held from 6th to 11th December 2021. The Society for AIDS in Africa, the organizers of ICASA, with more than 5,000 members in 56 countries, organized ICASA 2021 in collaboration with its international and local partners. ICASA was an important opportunity to share the benefits of such partnerships with other countries.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION .

Uganda Harm Reduction Network invited two staff members from Visual Echoes for human rights advocacy with a purpose of discussing the previous ICASA meeting which was held in

Durban South Africa .There major focus was looking for solutions on how People who inject with drugs would further utilize the opportunities offered by ICASA through sharing experiences with previous participants from the community.

In Africa we have 2 million people injecting with Drugs, 11% are living with HIV. According to UNAIDS ,PWDS account to 8% of all New HIV infections in sub Sahara Africa and 37% of all new infections in the middle east.This shouldn't be overlooked if we are to end AIDS in Africa.

Its upon this background that Uganda Harm Reduction Network called for a feedback meeting to lay strategies on how PWUDS would be brought to the center stage during the fight of preventing the spread of AIDS. Through plenary discussions, presentations,priority setting,reflections and feedback we came up with recommendations to both the International conference on AIDS and sexually transmitted infections in Africa ,Donors and Partners.

Project overall goal

To propose and communicate clear recommendations through a [position paper for consideration in the upcoming regional and international HIV conferences in 2022 and beyond.

Objectives

Create a platform where people who use and inject with drugs and harm reduction could share experience, discuss and evaluate prior and just concluded ICASA 2021 conference in Durban SA.

Explore ways to champion and advocate for meaningful inclusion and participation of PWUDS

To propose and communicate clear recommendations through a [position paper for consideration in the upcoming regional and international HIV conferences in 2022 and beyond.

To come up with recommendations and key messages to ICASA and Funders in unity.

Details of the activity

This activity was organized by Uganda Harm Reduction Network as one of the feedback meetings and invited different partners from KPS like Visual Echoes for Human Rights Advocacy to share their experiences with the previous ICASA.. We started the meeting with introductions were each member had to introduce his/her immediate neighbour and VEHRA had sent both the Executive Director and communications officer to represent. Many other organisations were in attendance for example Alliance of Women for change (AWAC) and the attendance was at maximum. After the introductions we went through the Agenda then the presentations were flaged off officially with the moderators first noting done members expectations. Most members expected to see resolutions on how to support PWUDS to participate in ICASA and discussions on the challenges encourted during the 2021 ICASA meeting. In the first session we had a brief about ICASA ,how to apply for both the scholarship and writing of abstracts. On this topic our Executive Director was of great importance during the discussions

since he had attended the previous ICASA meeting and he was on the committee that reviewed abstracts. We discussed in detail the benefits of ICASA to the community members and how more people could join the programme. We broke for the lunch break and on returning we formed groups that were supposed to discuss the challenges faced by PWUDS and other community members during the ICASA 2021 meeting. After heated discussion groups came up with recommendations which we presented in the meeting and stamped them to be forwarded to ICASA and Donors.

Key Recommendations to ICASA and Donors

- ❖ The ICASA organizing committee should prioritise PWUDS and Harm Reduction in the next upcoming event.
- ❖ ICASA should increase scholarship for PWUDS plus should increase scholarship for PWUDS plus harm reduction Advocates.
- ❖ They should also include sub themes on Harm reduction.
- ❖ ICASA should conduct Capacity strengthening to the community members through networks to participate more in ICASA
- ❖ Donors should allocate and increase scholarships for PWUDS plus Harm Reduction Advocates.
- ❖ Donors should step up funding for Harm Reduction.
- ❖ Government through the ministry of health should create conducive environment and policies that uphold human rights.
- ❖ Government should uphold human rights for all persons.

At the end of the day we had a group photograph and the meeting was officially closed with members enjoying catch up time with an evening tea session.

Achievements

We had an opportunity to network and lay strategic partnerships with different organisations and stakeholders who were participating in the feedback strategic meeting.

We learnt new skills and techniques of how to care for and relate with community members who inject and use drugs.

We were able to learn how to draft and make a good abstract when applying for scholarships at ICASA.

We learnt how to apply for ICASA and this will be applied to the rest of our members.

Challenges encountered

- There was a lack of proper time management on the side of the attendees. They reached late thus delaying the program.

- Repeated excusing self during the meeting and this affected the concentration and delivery of individuals to the main cause during discussions.
- There was a lot of heat in the conference room due to lack of proper aeration.

Recommendations

Next time members should be reminded to reach in time so that meetings start earlier to exhaust discussions.

There can be a chief wip to monitor and caution members on the unnecessary movements.

Organisers should consider conference rooms with better Airation.

Conclusion

As Visual Echoes for human rights Advocacy we thank Uganda Harm Reduction Network for inviting us to attend this feedback meeting. It was a great opportunity to interact with other partners and as well add our submissions on the recommendations to ICASA in regards to Pwuds and other key to population advocates. On the same note I thank the Top administration for giving me an opportunity to represent the organization during this meeting.

Prepared by: Ntambi Eugene
Signature.....

Reviewed by: Kaggwa Aggrey
Signature.....