SENSITIZATION FORUM FOR KEY POPULATION ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENTS ON OPPOSITION MONITORING AND COUNTERING OPPOSITION NARRATIVES

23RD – 24TH SEPTEMBER, 2020

[Virtual meeting link: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZIudeChqT4rGtyY8hk7PU9wbeGBQgFK9vPH]

CONCEPT NOTE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Traditionally, civil society advocacy has been associated with liberal agendas and actors defending progressive policies and human rights against unjust states and oppressive majorities. Key and affected population rights are contentiously debated worldwide. A variety of governments and societies use religious and cultural (mixed with other conservative) arguments to oppose a broad range of issues across the spectrum of key and affected populations, including sexual and LGBTIQ rights. Vocal anti-rights and anti-gender movements attempt to water down existing agreements on these issues and to block any progress in commitments to address new and upcoming concerns. Progressive civil society organisations (CSOs), allies and politicians must put forward their own positive political agendas to proactively shift the debate and embed their values within it.

Notably though, Kenya has over time witnessed a generally troubling trend of consistent abuse of key population and women’s rights, coupled with increasingly strong opposition groups that have firmly managed to infiltrate the courts, the media and also influence decisions of duty bearers, particularly within the Ministry of Health. As a result, the so called ‘pro-life’ movements thus managed to influence the withdrawal by the Ministry of Health of the Kenyan Standards
and Guidelines on prevention of maternal mortality from unsafe abortion in December 2013. In November 2018, the Kenya Medical Practitioners & Dentist Board banned Marie Stopes Kenya (MSK) from offering essential life-saving services to women of reproductive age. The ban, which was fully supported by the Ministry, also saw a letter from the Director of Medical Services to Marie Stopes Kenya further prohibiting them from exercising their constitutional duty to provide post abortal care. The letter, dated 20th November 2018, demanded that Marie Stopes refer any such patients elsewhere, regardless of Article 43(2) of the Constitution that clearly affirms the right to emergency medical treatment. Within the courts, we have seen the increased involvement of opposition groups in court cases including Petition 150 of 2016 & Petition 234 of 2016, a joint case challenging the decriminalization of same sex relations by the KP community. Several attacks have been faced so far with court cases either being filed or the opposition joining court cases to stifle gains made on various issues. The upcoming referendum is a possible avenue where the opposition team may use to push back on gains so far. We may lose the gains if this is allowed to continue unchallenged

JUSTIFICATION

In view of the foregoing, KELIN will be conducting a 2-day virtual training for Key population organizations and their communication departments on opposition monitoring and countering opposition narratives. The training will be useful in building skills to monitor opposition on contentious narratives, issues, laws, bills etc.

The capacity building forum will be preceded by an orientation to the communications manual draft which is aimed at countering negative opposition narratives against contentious human rights issues such as sex work, same sex sexual relations and drug use

TRAINING OBJECTIVES

The training objectives are as follows:

I. Orient the participants to the communications manual draft and allow them to give inputs/feedback to it. The manual is aimed at countering negative opposition narratives against contentious human rights issues such as sex work, same sex sexual relations and drug use.
II. Empower organizations to minimize opposition attacks on key and affected populations and thus ensuring government is duly held accountable in implementing fully the existing set of laws and policies in place (devoid of politics and religious fanaticism that has clouded the processes).

III. Strengthen the civic space on key and affected populations and ensure that communities, civil society organizations and individual activists are empowered to take up their rights and that they are the ones at the forefront demanding for their rights when the duty bearers fail or attempt to curtail their rights.

IV. Capacity build organizations to respond to attacks on the key population community and complement ongoing efforts from the opposition monitoring projects.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The following are the expected outcomes as a result of the training:

I. Participants trained to support reduced stigma and discrimination regarding HIV and rights of KPs and AGYW amongst duty bearers, the general community, and within the KP and AGYW groups.

II. Reach consensus on a way forward with regards to the adoption and collaborative approach of countering negative opposition narratives.

III. Incorporation of the feedback from participants onto the communications manual aimed at countering negative opposition narratives against contentious human rights issues such as sex work, same sex sexual relations and drug use.

METHODOLOGY

The participants of this meeting are from like-minded CSOs, who have been key contributors to mitigating opposition within the key population space nationally, regionally and internationally. Their insight will be invaluable in finalizing a communications manual aimed at countering negative opposition narratives against contentious human rights issues such as sex work, same sex sexual relations and drug use. The following methodologies will be utilized to facilitate information sharing:

a) Power point presentations
b) Panel discussions and moderated on topical issues identified

c) All presentations will be provided in soft copy at the end of the workshop

PARTICIPANTS:

45 participants will attend the training workshop.

VENUE AND DATE
Given the current COVID-19 climate, the meeting will be held virtually on 23-24 September 2020.

CONVENERS

The Partnership to Inspire, Transform and Connect the HIV response (PITCH)