



West Nile Rainbow Initiative

Reports

2018 Validation Report

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Report of the Validation Meeting of the study done into the status of the access to health and justice services, for sexual and gender minorities and female sex workers in the West Nile sub region in Uganda

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For
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List of acronyms

AIC	AIDS Information Center
D.DHO	Deputy District Health Officer
FSW	Female Sex Workers
HIV	Human Immune Virus
IDI	Infectious Disease Institute
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
MARPI- Clinic	Most At Risk Populations' Initiative - Clinic
RHU	Reproduction Health Uganda
SGMs	Sexual and Gender Minorities
UHRC	Uganda Human Rights Commission
WERAIN	West Nile Rainbow Initiative

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I. Introduction

Following the research survey carried out by West Nile Rainbow Initiative (WERAIN), into the status of the access to health and justice services, for sexual and gender minorities and female sex workers in the West Nile sub region in Uganda. With the aim; of identifying and mapping SGMs/FSWs within the sub region and establish a working network of these communities. And after the final report of the survey was produced, it was only prudent to have a validation meeting with the participants to ensure data quality, validity, accuracy and applicability.

Because of resource constraints, several meetings were scheduled with the different stake holders instead on one general meeting that would have brought everybody in one room for a more honest discussion and engagements.

II. Opening of the meeting

Five meetings were held during the period of this validation process. These included one with the study participants from the sexwork and gender and sexual minorities, the deputy District Health Officer (D.DHO), Infectious Disease Institute (IDI), Aids Information Center (AIC) as health service providers and the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) under the justice sector services. Other institutions that participated in the research survey did not participate as many offices had not yet opened for the New Year, in some offices, the officers were indisposed, as they were out in the field, or were just not reachable. Thus scheduling meetings became difficult.

The first meeting held was with the sexworkers and the Sexual and Gender Minorities. One meeting was scheduled for all the participants, as resources could not allow facilitating individual group meetings as it was dung the survey. Of the 29 participants that participated in the survey, the validation meeting had 19 participants, of which 12 were female sexworkers and 7 were LGBT persons. This meeting took two hours, and it was conducted a dialogue manner.

III. Introduction and objectives of the meeting

The Executive Director of WERAIN welcomed everyone, and inquired if everyone understood English. A brief debate and it was agreed that predominantly use English and individual translations of Swahili and Lugbara. He explained to the participants about the meeting, as a validation meeting following the research survey that was carried out. He further endeavored to explain that this process was also to get hear from the participants on whether the contents of the report truly reflect their views during the survey. He also informed the participants the meeting was informally held at the venue, so we were going have a discussion. Participants introduced themselves

The consultant then in detail explained that this meeting as had been mentioned was a validation meeting to ensure data quality, validity, accuracy and applicability. He further explained that the participants were to be taken through the whole report of the survey that was

carried out in June 2017. And this was to make sure that the participants understand the findings, therefore they should own the same or dispute the same before the report is shared with other key stake holders.

IV. Plenary sessions

1.1 Meeting with participants

The consultants then took the participants through the report page by page. In their feedback, information they shared during the survey. The sexworkers however emphasized that they had issues engaging with Infectious Disease Institute. And specifically raised concerns with some specific officers at the institution, whom they alleged asks the sex worker peers to mobilize their community members, and their mobilisation fee is not paid. They specifically noted that this particular officer is secretarianism as he only gives mobilisation fee to people who speak Luganda, a language popularly spoken from the central part of Uganda. He apparently comes from that area. They also requested that WERAIN engages with the police about the arrests for being idle and orderly, and they hope the report will create a platform to do advocacy around such issues.

The meeting came to an end with all participants agreeing with the report, and it is a true reflection of the status of the access to health and justice services, for sexual and gender minorities and female sex workers in the West Nile sub region in Uganda. Participants were given a modest transport reimbursement and the meeting closed.

1.2 Meeting with the Deputy District Health Officer - Arua

This was the first meeting with the institutions. The meeting was scheduled with the District Health Educator, but she had an urgent meeting she had to attend to in Kampala. She handed us to another officer. The team was welcomed by the Deputy District Health Officer. The Executive Director of WERAIN introduced the team, and explained to the officer the purpose of the meeting. As he was not the officer interacted with during the survey, he was brought up to speed with what the research was about, and therefore, this was a validation meeting, following that research.

The consultant then took the officer through all the 23 pages of the research report; in his reaction to the report, the officer reacted to the feedback that was given during the research about the District Health Educator not have engaged with key populations within the sub region. He said that quite a number of activities had taken place since June - July 2017, and as the districts health office, they managed to get in touch with Marpi- Clinic, MARPS- Network, IDI, and RHU and there is combined effort and progress has been made in interaction with the gender and sexual minorities.

His expression about the report, he noted that it was quite a comprehensive assessment done and that the findings were 99% reflective of what the institution had experienced in the past one year. And the feedback coming from institutions during the survey was equally a true reflection

of what was happening on ground in regard to providing services to these communities. That the social- cultural aspects seem to be in support, though not fully, towards sexworkers, and the aspect of the gender and sexual minorities, the local community is not comfortable discussing such issues.

He re-sounded the institutions commitment to an open policy and they continue to engage in serious discussions on these issues. Looking at it with the responsibilities that come with the office, they are compelled to respond positively to the needs of these communities. He added services to sexwork, even with the funding gap he was happy that there is a health officer who continuing to extend to them services, and the fact that she was doing it against all odds, was quite recommendable. And in terms of capacity building of health workers, within the region, there are very many people who have been trained, especially in areas where there are sexworkers hotspots like in Bondo, Arua Regional Hospital and Oliy. And added that challenge is that as institutions, workers work on standing orders, that's to say, they are expected to report to work at 9:00am and leave at 5:00pm. So a patient who goes to the health facility past those hours is not helped. He believes there is a lot to do in that area, and echoed that as a district, they are open to innovations in finding solutions to such challenges.

In conclusion, he praised WERAIN for taking the initiative to carry out this research intimated that until very people see, they will not know, and he assured WERAIN that they have a platform to continue the conversation for better action to be taken. The meeting then ended.

1.3 Meeting with Aids Information Center (AIC) - Arua

The officer meet first thanked WERAIN for the contribution towards World Aids Day. And he advised that next time they should increase in production of items like t-shirts. The Executive Director WERAIN then introduced the team and mentioned more about the validation meeting.

The consultant then took the officer through the report in detail. This was the feedback; He thanked the team for coming back for the validation meeting, as it is only good research manners. He noted that the sample size for the sexworkers was small, and if his opinion was sought before the research process, he would have been very key in mobilisation and he mentioned that leaving out sexworkers who are below the age of nineteen, when some of them are even mothers. He advised a lot should be looked into when considering the exclusion criteria. He further intimated that the problem even becomes worse with the underage, as they become have other things they go through and many more unique challenges. And inclusion of all sexworkers would have made this research study more revealing and this would have helped to explore the challenges adolescent sexworkers face.

He added that a critical exploring of the lives of urban sexworkers and high end sexworkers vs. sexworkers in the rural setting, as he believes there are classes of sexworkers, they all have ambitions, goals and dreams. And when not well reached, there is no possibility of finding alternative jobs.

He then narrated, the challenges the institution is generally facing in extending services to sexworkers. AIC ventured in working with sexworkers when no institution within the sub region thought about targeting key populations. And they tried their best to penetrate the sexwork population for meaningful engagement in HIV response, and this puts them at the forefront in HIV response in this community. Work they did underground, as they tried to build confidence between them and payments the community members.

Eventually other stakeholders started getting on board. However, because of the increased funding in key population service delivery, some of these other institutions used money to reach their target communities, they made extravagant offers in allowances. This caused some sexworkers who were already targeted, make cross over's because of the money. This therefore meant that these institutions were targeting persons who were already receiving services from somewhere else, thus not doing much to identify new sexworkers to reach on ground.

He advised that this can be solved by developing strong strategic partnerships. And was quite saddened that resources could not allow, but he would rather this validation meeting to have gathered all the stakeholders that were reached during the research, and have an honest debate, until people accept to look at these issues that are within the society. He added that as stakeholders, they need to come out and see what kind of complimentary roles they each can contribute.

He re-emphasized that even though this validation process has been done, there is still a need to have one general validation meeting so that these issues are addressed face one and each stakeholder is held accountable. He concluded by saying, that every human being has a right to access health services. He challenged WERAIN to take the lead in making sure this happens. He commended the organisation for taking the direction of serving key populations, and specifically for the sacrifices especially those that come with working within their localities. The meeting ended at that point.

1.4 Meeting with Infectious Disease Institute (IDI) – Arua

At IDI, we met with the Prevention Technical Officer, who barely had time to talk to us. He offered us 20 minutes, as he alleged he was very busy. Introductions were made and then the Executive Director of WERAIN explained the purpose of the meeting. The consultant then took him through the whole report. This was his feedback;

All that was said, about PEP, condom and lubricants, the office has a plan and already got a budget. They wish to organise a dialogue meeting with the gender and sexual minority community members, and have a needs assessment done, to seek solutions. And also share more information about the institution and the services offered. He requested that WERAIN helps in mobilizing participants.

He said they have been working with police and he knows their perception of gender and sexual minorities, and hopes that Uganda Human Rights Commission will be of so much support on training these officers about human rights of key populations.

As he concluded, he emphasized that the dialogue will be in partnership with IDI and WERAIN, as the beginning of meaningful engagements. And the meeting ended.

1.5 Meeting with Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) - Arua

The Executive Director of WERAIN introduced the team, and gave a brief background about WERAIN and the nature of work it is engaged in within the sub region. The officer met showed interest in knowing more about key populations. He further went on to explain that this meeting was a validation meeting following the research survey that was done. The officer said it was very ethical and professional of the WERAIN to actually follow up with a validation meeting, and she requested to have a copy of the final report.

The consultant then took her through the report page by page. In her reaction to the whole report and its findings;

She said it was a very interesting one, and she liked the findings, and was looking forward to receiving her copy, however, it needed a wider coverage. She added that, it is small and quality. One thing she was learning, without necessarily condoning, but basing on the values of humanity and human rights, every human being, every Ugandan has a right to access services. And that there is no 'human being', and then 'LGBT people'; all people are human beings and are equal. She shared that she has always wanted to interact and know more about sexual orientation and gender identity, and their needs in regard to the Commissions mandate.

On the issues of access, she asked if there are very specific and unique challenges, which would hinder sexworkers or LGBT persons from seeking medical services as of the general community? The consultant responded by giving her examples;

- a) A sexworker can have a recurrent sexual health problem, at the health facility, she is required to also bring her sexual partner so that they both treatment and the issue completely treated. A sexworker, who has multiple sexual partners, will not come back to such a health facility.
- b) A lesbian woman, who has a sexual health problem, at the health facility, she would be required to give more information to a health worker about her sexual practices, and to bring her partner too for treatment. The reality is, such a couple would be asked inhumane and degrading questions, about their gender roles and sexual practices in their relationship. Such experiences play a great role in scaring away such people from seeking such services.
- c) A trans person, who has a criminal case complaint, will fear going to police to report the criminal matter, since the reality has been that in such a situation, should their gender identity be revealed, tables are turned and the issues becomes about this persons gender identity or expression. With such expectations, this trans person will not seek justice because of the fear of what could happen to their person.

The meeting ended on this note.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, the feedback from the validation meeting suggest, that the research survey, was a true reflection of the participants responses. It was widely welcomed and adopted as it has good data quality, as valid, accurate and applicable.

There were also several recommendations that were made for WERAIN during this process;

- An advocacy strategy should be developed, to address the issue of unlawful arrests that is faced by the sexworkers within the sub region.
- Both the research survey report and the validation report to be shared with the stakeholders.
- WERAIN should take the lead in writing a concept note, and share it with partners for support in organising another validation meeting that will bring all stakeholders under one roof.
- WERAIN should in future carry out an extensive research, targeting a bigger number of respondents, and also include the teenage sexworkers for more revealing findings.