

1. BACKGROND

1.1 Network of Afar Region PLWHA Associations'

The Network of Afar Region PLWHA Associations' (The Network) was launched in November 2007 to coordinate associations' effort and to serve as a regional focal point in raising the voice of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) collectively.

The Network brings together 16 PLWHA associations for common objective of addressing the epidemic and to make a genuine contribution of PLWHA to mitigate the adverse effects of HIV/AIDS in Afar region, and at the same time to fight for the rights of PLWHA.

The established PLWHA associations in the region are trying to provide care and support, treatment, and working to reduce stigma and discrimination.

The overall goal of the Network is to make a guideline to the PLWHA to mitigate the multi-Secular effect of HIV/AIDS through maximum effort and GIPA and their Association

From long-term perspective the Network has set two interlink and broader objective to pursue:

- Increase the Contribution of PLWHA to the regional effects in Combating the speed of HIV AIDS and alleviate its diverse effect in Afar regional state.
- Build the Capacity of PLWHA to deal with the Impacts of HIV/AIDS & to create access to different services.

Therefore, the Afar Regional Network was established to unit with one voice to secure the necessities that they need to achieve their goals of positives in the region.

Afar Network is an active member of Network of networks of HIV positives in Ethiopia (NEP+) which was established in October 2004 with the view of raising collective voice of people living with HIV/AIDS. As a national level NEP+ has a

membership more than 210 associations. The core support of the Network has mainly come via NEP+.

1.2 Demographic Back ground

Afar is one of the nine Regional States of [Ethiopia](#), and is the homeland of the [Afar people](#). It is known as Region 2, its current capital is [Semera](#) on the [Awash - Djibouti](#) highway.

The [Afar Depression](#), also known as the Danakil depression, is the lowest point in Ethiopia and one of the lowest in [Africa](#) and is located in the north part of the Region. The southern part consists of the valley of the [Awash River](#), which empties into a string of lakes along the Ethiopian-[Djibouti](#) border. Other notable landmarks include the [Awash](#) and [Yangudi Rassa National Parks](#).

Based on the 2007 Census conducted by the [Central Statistical Agency](#) of Ethiopia (CSA), the Afar Region has a total population of 1,411,092, consisting of 786,338 men and 624,754 women; urban inhabitants number 188,723 or 13.4% of the population.

According to the regional health bureau annual report of the 1995 EFY, Health services are poorly allocated, inequitably staffed, underutilized and under budgeted. Currently two Hospitals, 15 Health centers 78 health posts & 45 clinics are rendering health services to the regional population. VCT services are available in 2 Hospital, 15 Health centers and 4 clinics. ART & PMTCT services are being provided in 2 hospitals & 5 health centers

As a region predominantly crossed by the Ethio-Djibouti road, Afar has busy towns which include Awash, Gedamaytu, Gewane, Ardaytu, Logiya and Asaita. These towns serve as business juncture and truckers resort where the predominant economic activities of the country take place. A large number of night clubs, pubs with several commercial sex workers are busily operating in these towns.

2.0 HIV/AIDS situation in the region

The adult HIV prevalence is estimated to be 2,0%,and there are close to 17,432 individuals in Afar region living with HIV/AIDS and of which 4,788 are in need of ART. Total number of AIDS orphans in the region is estimated to be 12360. (Afar Region HAPCO Report, projected for 2008)

3.0 Vision

To see a society free of HIV/AIDS and an empowered HIV positive individuals, capable of leading and asserting their economic, social and political rights.

4.0 Mission

We exist to fight and promote the economic, social and political rights of PLWHA through advocacy and strengthening the capacity of existing associations of positive men and women and creating favorable environment for the establishment of PLWHA associations.

5.0 Some of programmatic activities the network is currently carrying out

The Network has made two grant agreements. The first is a one year contract agreement with the I-Tech. The other with NEP+, a one year grant that has been directed from THE GLOBAL FUND via NEP+, named GF R-7.

Using these funds the network has been working on the following activities:

5.1 Palliative care

The network has hired 32 HIV positives who work as palliative care givers. Their major duties are following up ART adherence, and giving home based care (HBC) services. The ART adherence follow up includes consulting HIV positives on how to use ARV, &

follow their ART uptake. The HBC services include simple nursing services, environmental sanitation, and cooking services to any bed ridden HIV positives in the region. They also train their families on how to give HBC services to the bed ridden.

Since the start of using regular palliative care givers, the network has improved the quality of its service delivery. The network has given palliative services for hundreds of HIV positives in the region, and currently there are about one hundred HIV positives that are getting the network's humanitarian services

5.2 Income Generating Activities (IGA)

To empower HIV positive individuals, capable of leading and asserting their economic rights , is part of our Vision. To make the dream come true the network has engaged itself in creating opportunities to HIV positives to begin their own businesses. In few months of time, that run from April 2009 through January 2010, the Network has helped 60 men and woman HIV positives to start their own business. After giving small business management and entrepreneurship skills training, the network has supplied seed money which is necessary to start business. Within a short time of period, their life has been dramatically changed both in terms of economic and social aspects.

The network schedules to launch another IGA package within the next two or three months of time, which may give job opportunities to 45 HIV positives.

5.3 Tracing of lost – to – follow ups (LTFP) & promoting adherence to ART

With financial & technical support from the I-TECH , the network has hired 6 outreach workers (OW) , and 3 ART support groups (ASG) from PLWHA associations in Dubti, Ayssaita and Awash. They are working in collaboration with I-TECH supported health facilities in Dubti, Ayssaita and Awash. One of the key objectives of this project is to increase ART adherence and reduce LTFU.

ASGs promote clients adherence to ART through sharing life experiences & open dialogues. They also deliver HIV and ART related messages to ART clients and the community.

The OWs trace LTFU in collaboration with health facilities based I-TECH case managers and data analysts. Using clients' contacts from the intake forms, OWs conduct follow ups by telephones, and pay home visits to trace LTFU clients. They conduct home visits to provide emotional support and education to ART clients and family care givers about nutrition, safer sex, physical care, and common side effects of ART. They also facilitate community mobilization activities which support clients to have access to food, clothing, and shelter.

Since the start of the project on September 2007,with a joint efforts of OWs ,ASGs,I-TECH case managers, and data analysts ,it has been succeeded in bringing about 70 LTFU back to ART and enrolled in about 200 new ART clients.

5.4 Nutritional support

One of the barriers to clients to adhere to treatment & care is lack of needed nutrition. Nutrition plays a vital role in uplifting & improving not only the standards of clients but also their adherence to ART. Using a fund from the I-TECH the network is providing nutritional support to 150 PLHWA in Dubti woreda.

5.5 Capacity building to PLHWA associations

Using a fund from the Global Fund via NEP+, the network has procured 2 desktop computers to 2 PLHWA associations. It also has hired, with all the necessary budget, 1 financial officer, 1 project officer, and 1 secretary cashier to each of the associations in Dubti and Logia.