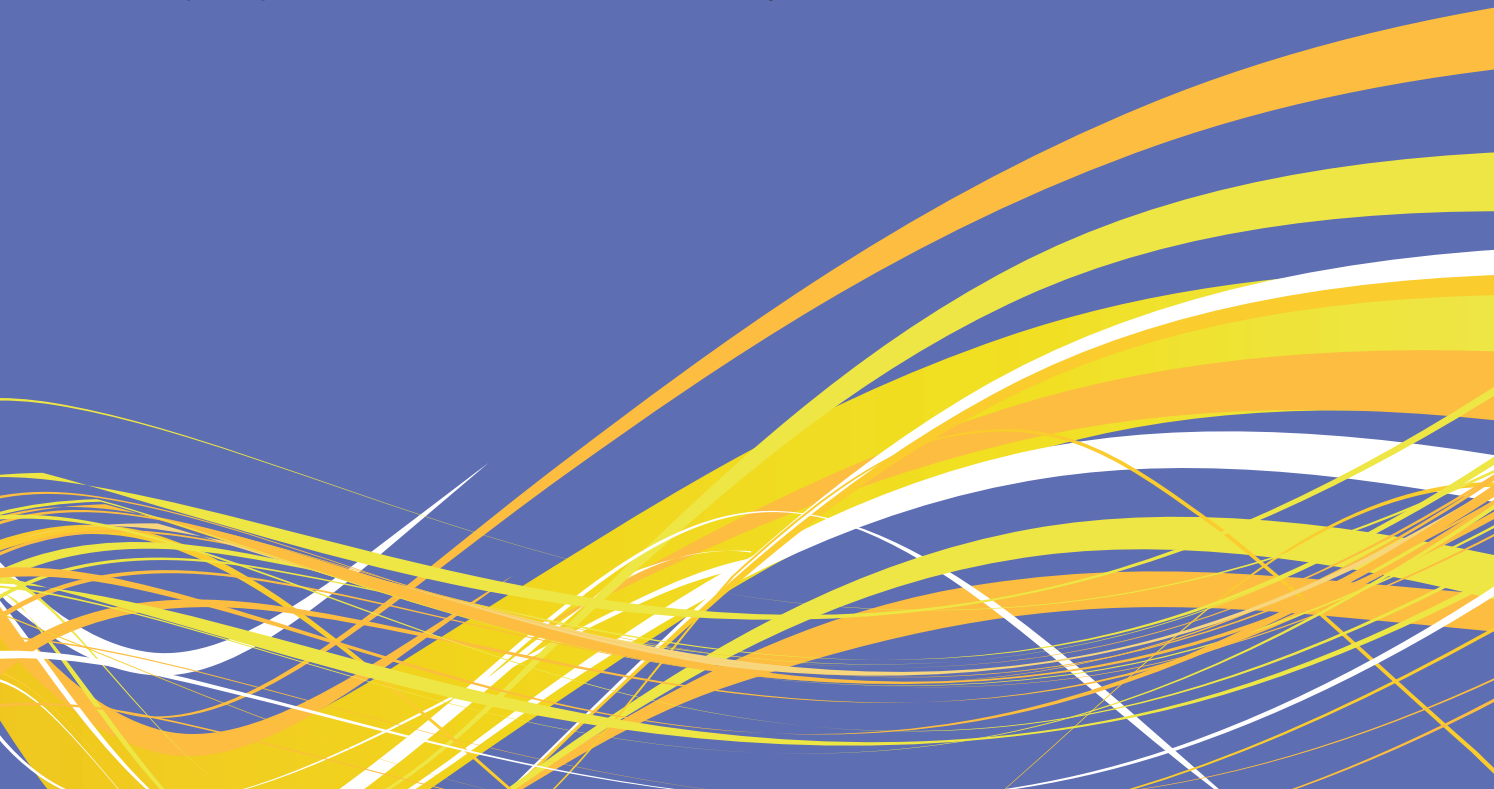


Parliamentarians Take Action

As elected officials, Parliamentarians are in the position to have a huge impact on HIV prevention. With access to resources and influence, Parliamentarians are in a position to influence and promote HIV prevention policies.

Parliamentarians have a key role as leaders, working together with civil society, driving HIV prevention by targeting their activities to where they can have an impact on the structural level (as well as on individuals and communities) by:

- Ensuring establishment of laws to prevent stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV (PLHIV) and their families.
- Enforcing laws against gender-based violence.
- Promoting activities to change social and cultural norms that support high risk behaviour.
- Ensuring programmes are in place for combination prevention (a mix of biomedical, behavioural, and structural prevention strategies).
- Building awareness and role modelling prevention strategies among constituents, such as reducing concurrent relationships, knowing HIV status, using condoms correctly and consistently, as well as accessing services such as male circumcision, and prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV.
- Building institutional and organisational capacities in your health systems and in community based organisations to improve prevention services and foster sustainability.



1st Step – Know your Constituency and Know your Epidemic

Every constituency is different. As an elected official, representing your constituency in Parliament, it is essential that you ‘know’ those you represent and are able to respond to their needs. With respect to the national and regional response to HIV, the process of ‘knowing your constituency’ means understanding:

- Who is most affected by HIV
- The extent to which HIV is prevalent among the members of your constituency
- The various sub-groups within your constituency and potential risk behaviours
- The laws, policies and settings that facilitate HIV transmission.

With this knowledge, Parliamentarians are better placed to advocate, coordinate and support HIV prevention programmes that meet community needs, thereby having the greatest impact toward reducing HIV infections.

To know your constituency consider the following:

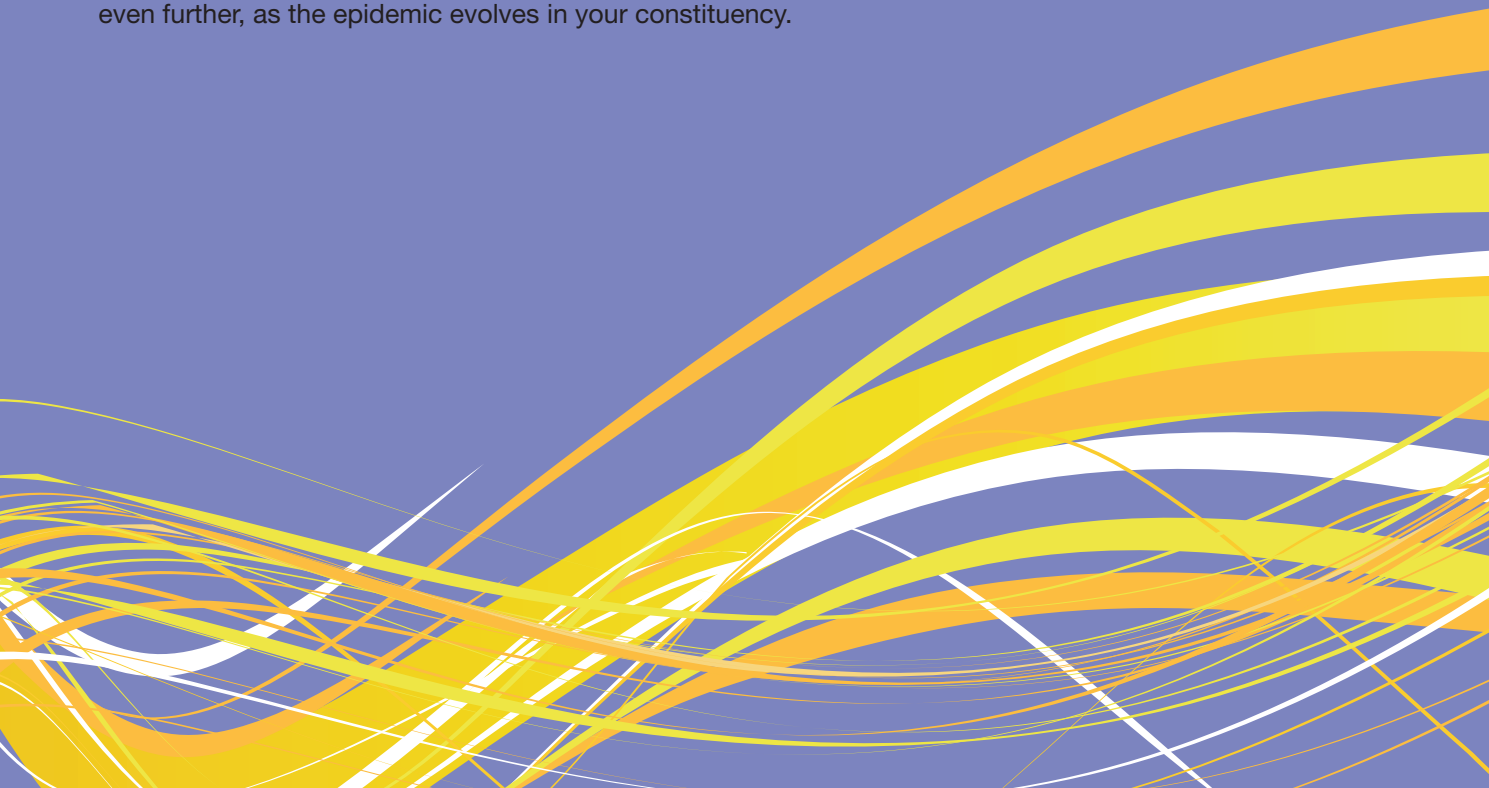
- What are the social and economic realities of life for the members of your constituency, which could relate to HIV prevention?
- What are the dominant and minority cultural groups in your constituency? Have a detailed understanding of the ‘cultural environment’ that is proving a challenge to HIV prevention.
- Do migrants, prisoners, and sex workers in your constituency have access to essential prevention services? Do you know the laws and HIV prevention programming efforts related to these populations?
- Are People Living with HIV (PLHIV) meaningfully involved in policies and programmes that affected their lives? How are PLHIV involved in HIV prevention initiatives?
- Is HIV-related stigma and discrimination prominent in your constituency? If so, consider how stigma and discrimination create barriers to HIV prevention.
- What is the status of the health system in your constituency? Is the health system providing for the most basic health needs of your constituents? Do most people rely on the public sector or on traditional practitioners for their health care?

Know Your Epidemic

There is no exact recipe for success in HIV prevention. Success comes from leaders who understand what is driving HIV transmission in your constituency and identify strategies that prevent HIV, respect human rights, and strive to build a healthier society for all.

'Knowing your epidemic' means more than having basic knowledge, it means:

- Analysing in detail the key drivers and how they occur in your community, for example:
 - **Multiple concurrent partnerships** - a key driver of the epidemic is the social trend toward having multiple sexual partners at the same time.
 - **Intergenerational sex**- higher HIV prevalence has been reported in young women who are in sexual relationships with older men. Equally, high HIV prevalence has been reported in older men, who have relationships with significantly younger women.
 - **Alcohol abuse** - with increasing risky sexual behaviour practices.
 - **Limited consistent and correct use of condoms** - for a variety of reasons, condom use is lower in the general population, especially among married couples. Yet evidence shows that high levels of HIV transmission take place among married couples.
 - **Sexual violence** - high levels of sexual violence are linked with risky sexual behaviour and HIV infection.
- Understanding the interlinkages between epidemiology, behavioural factors and social trends – and using knowledge to develop programmes and policies that target these factors.
- Working together with local and national HIV-focused organisations to carry your understanding of key drivers even further, as the epidemic evolves in your constituency.



2nd Step – Mobilise for HIV Prevention

Parliamentarians are leaders and through their work can mobilise communities in support of HIV prevention policies and programmes. By joining regional efforts to reduce by 50% all new infections (the 50 by 15 Prevention Movement), Parliamentarians can use knowledge and information gained to educate and mobilise their fellow policy makers towards establishing supportive and progressive policies and programmes in their communities in their constituencies.

It is important to remember

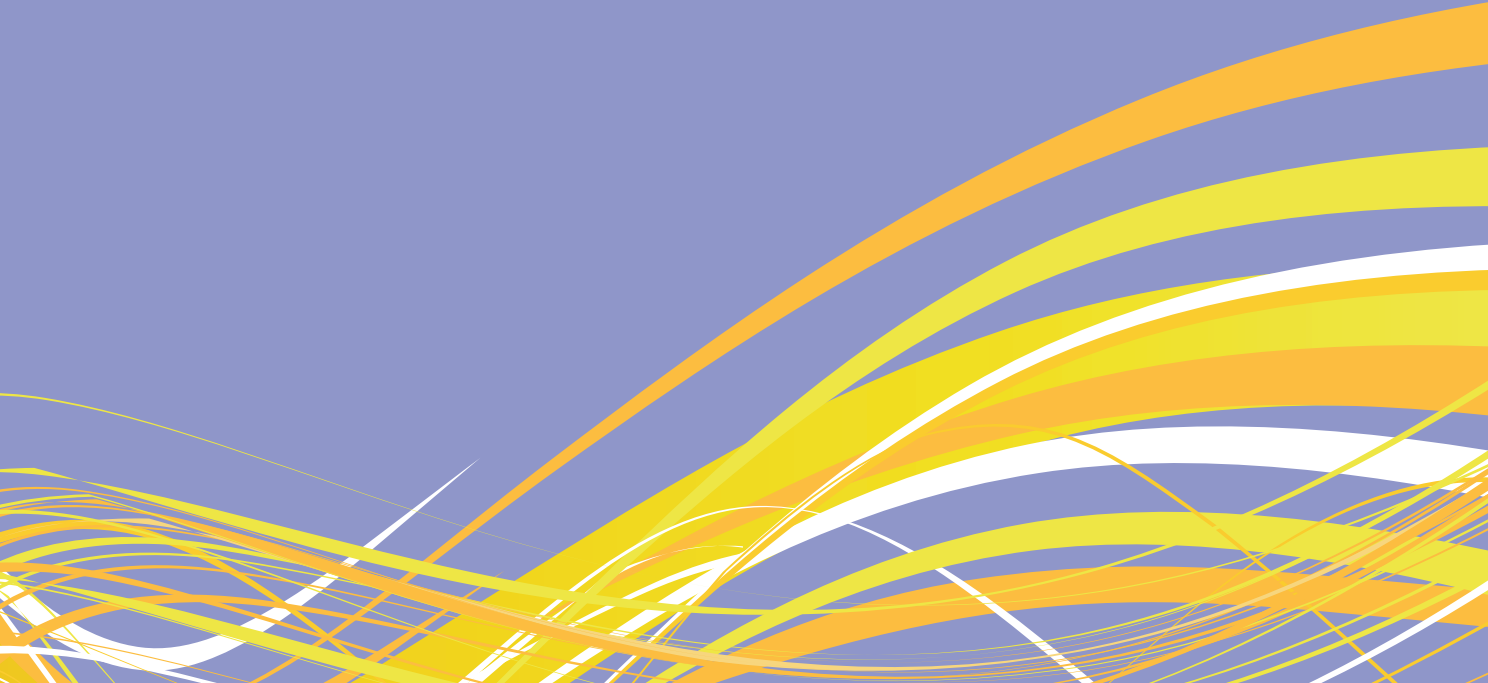
- HIV prevention works! Often people feel that prevention is difficult and complex. However, there is a lot of research and evidence of what works, which can be easily adapted for any community or country.
- Parliamentarians have a key role in ensuring that national AIDS programmes and community-based organisations (CBOs) learn from best practices in HIV prevention from across the SADC region.
- Providing decisive leadership will reduce time wasted in implementing vital strategies. You can make faster and more appropriate decisions by knowing facts about HIV in your constituencies.
- Even if there is political will, there is need to prioritise funding for prevention programmes to reach national and regional targets. Parliamentarians can play a key role in overseeing how national funding is attributed to HIV prevention, care and treatment.
- ‘Breaking the silence’ around HIV remains key to eradicating HIV related stigma and discrimination, which continue to hinder people from accessing prevention programmes.
- Human rights are fundamental. It is important to consider all vulnerable populations including men who have sex with men and sex workers in HIV prevention programmes.
- Migration in the SADC region and the lack of ‘official’ status means Parliamentarians must work at a regional, as well as national, level to ensure that HIV prevention services are available consistently across borders.

How to mobilise for prevention?

- **Listen** to your constituency and your fellow policy makers by having meetings, consultations and visits with them, taking careful note of their issues of concern, and linking these with the epidemic trends in your constituency
- **Share and discuss** key messages on why they should support the Movement.
- **Serve as a role model** through your lifestyle in your community for HIV prevention-related practices.
- **Research and review** important commitments towards prevention – the Abuja Declaration, the Declaration of

Commitment, and the Maseru Declaration.


- **Recognise openly and publicly** that governments need to be accountable for delivering on promises made to their citizens.
- **Highlight the link between human rights** and access to prevention, and positive prevention for PLHIV is a human rights issue, to which you are fully committed.
- **Be able to explain** how prevention is linked to gender-based violence and stigma and discrimination against women and that supporting prevention supports the rights of women.
- **Explain** how prevention **links to development and meeting national MDG targets**. Preventing new HIV infections is the best way to alleviate the impact of the epidemic on economic development.
- **Participate and support** the 50 by 15 Prevention Movement. This could be involvement in prevention campaigns, meetings and other public shows of support, or providing resources, skills expertise and management skills to prevention programmes.
- Make a plan to **keep the 'prevention agenda' alive** even after your term ends as a Parliamentarian.



3rd Step – Support your Constituency to Take Action for HIV Prevention

Once you have informed and mobilised constituencies toward HIV prevention and the '50 by 15' Prevention Movement, they need to take ownership of the 'prevention priority'. By encouraging solutions that are directed from leadership within the different sectors in your constituency (including the faith-based sector, the private sector, civil society, members of the media), rather than from you as the parliamentarian, you can ensure long-term sustainable gains in HIV prevention.

How to Support Your Constituencies

- Consult with representatives of the different sectors in your constituency during the planning stage of a prevention programme on issues of concern and how to tackle these issues.
 - Involve your constituency in:
 - Setting objectives and deciding on activities for programmes, or for the development of new policies on HIV prevention. Do not underestimate the value of your constituency's input for your planning!
 - Implementing prevention programmes - if they have been involved in the planning stage, they will be more committed to the success of implementation
 - Incorporating monitoring and evaluation (M&E) into programmes, as it can be highly motivating to see where you are 'making a difference'. Involvement in M&E also gives constituencies the chance to share feedback and lessons learned to help improve HIV prevention programming in the future.
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4th Step – Be Accountable

Accountability is powerful because it means those who have the power to make changes must be able to show that they have done all they can. In HIV prevention, this means saving lives. As Parliamentarians, you are accountable to contribute to your government's commitments to deliver what they have promised.

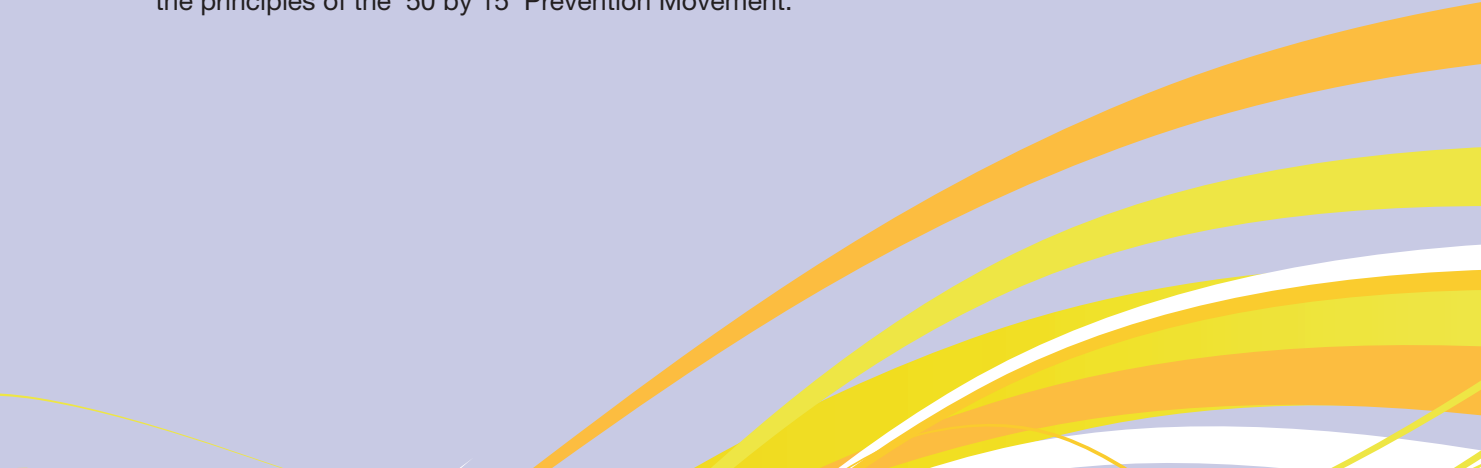
Accountability for action on prevention means that we understand the issue, and are developing appropriate, effective and efficient programmes and policies for HIV prevention. Accountability means delivering on our promises, declarations and commitments, and doing all that is possible in our personal and public lives to achieve targets.

What is expected?

- Mobilising and allocating resources for effective HIV prevention programmes at a scale large enough to benefit all the members of your constituency and more strategic use of prevention resources.
- Advocating for revision of national HIV prevention policies and strategies, as needed, based on epidemiological trends.
- Drawing from experiences of PLHIV, and your constituents, and incorporating them into policy making issues and relevant programme development activities for HIV prevention.
- Collaborating with your fellow Parliamentarians, civil society and leaders in other sectors to address socio-economic and cultural determinants of HIV transmission.
- Promoting integration of HIV prevention, rapidly and effectively, into maternal and child health, sexual and reproductive health, and TB services.

- Focusing attention on special populations, within HIV prevention programmes, including men who have sex with men, young women, sex workers, migrant workers, drug users and so forth.
- Supporting operational research/clinical trials and research studies to facilitate new HIV prevention strategies.

Where your help is needed most?

- Engaging Heads of States, Ministers of Health and National AIDS Council leaders to commit to and resource HIV prevention efforts for the '50 by 15' Prevention Movement.
 - Reaching out to your constituency.
 - Utilising Parliamentary oversight functions (e.g. on budgets) to drive the Movement forward
 - Keeping HIV prevention on the agenda.
 - Working on National Strategic Plans and National Prevention Strategies to make sure they are aligned with the principles of the '50 by 15' Prevention Movement.
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5th Step – How to Lead by Example

As a Parliamentarian, committed to the '50 by 15' Prevention Movement, your role is to stand as a strong force supporting effective combination HIV prevention to be made available to everyone. This begins with appreciating one's own risk.

We need leaders who are willing to go beyond the usual commitments to show they stand by their promises to make decisions that contribute to saving lives. Take your lead from the Champions for an HIV-Free Generation who 'stand for what is right even when they stand alone'.

View challenges to the response to HIV in your country as opportunities to translating your commitments into action.

Always be a role model by:

- Displaying through your words and actions your support for human rights and dignity for all, especially PLHIV, women and children
- Speaking out bravely and boldly, and challenging the status quo on HIV prevention in your country, and illustrating that you have unswerving commitment to reducing the impact of HIV.

- Being transparent in your actions by informing people what you are doing in support of HIV prevention.
- Making meeting agendas and programme plans and financial statements easily available.
- Showing that you are keeping your promises.
- Always going back to what you have promised to deliver.

