

**AIDS  
2020**

**23RD INTERNATIONAL AIDS CONFERENCE**

**VIRTUAL**

**6 - 10 JULY 2020**

# Differentiated service delivery (DSD) in 2020

Responding to the needs of people living with HIV before, during and after COVID-19

# Utilizing the Network of HIV Positives in Sierra Leone (NETHIPS) for DSD during COVID-19

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# Impact of COVID-19 on DSD in Sierra Leone

## *Positive* Impact

- Establishment of functional **Community ART Groups (CAG)**
  - Increased treatment uptake and adherence thus reducing defaulting
  - Communities able **to reach harder-to-reach people**
  - Improved early detection and quick response
- 3 multi-month dispensing (MMD) for all recipients of care

## *Negative* Impact

- Without adequate preparation, **MMD could lead to drug stock outs** (community-led monitoring)
- Many clients fear visiting facilities for services, perceiving them to be fertile ground for COVID-19 infection
- Essential HIV services suspended (e.g. viral load and early infant diagnosis testing)
- Shortage of second line treatment and pediatric ARV
- Lack of food during total lockdown negatively affects ARV uptake

# Community Adherence Groups (CAGs)

## Key Principles of CAGs

- 6-10 member groups of stable recipients of care on ART, from a community in the same geographic location
- With support from the National AIDS Control Program (NACP), group members perform community-based delivery of medications, provide adherence support and monitor treatment outcomes
- One member of the group collects medications for all members
- Expert clients measure weight and conduct symptom-based general health assessments for other members
- Peer support is provided during drug distribution
- CAGs promote treatment adherence amongst peers
- CAGs serve as a link between the community and the health care setting, including raising awareness on COVID-19 infection prevention & control measures

# Physical distancing + Community Adherence Groups



# What's next? Where to from here

- NACP to take lead in coordinating the implementation of the DSD in Sierra Leone as per DSD policy
- Communities to be fully involved in the roll out and the implementation of the activities
- Drop in centers/ wellness centers to be equipped and empowered to carry out essential HIV Services in order to decongest the Health Facilities

## **Prioritized studies:**

- Prevalence of HIV and COVID-19 co-morbidity
- Effect of COVID-19 on adherence to ART