

## **POSSIBILITY FOR IMPROVEMENT OF SERVICES FOR MENTAL HEALTH OF PEOPLE WHO LIVE WITH HIV**

A presentation by Dragan Sormaz, Director, AID+, Serbia  
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*Translation from Serbian*

In Serbia as well as in whole southeastern Europe there is a problem of increasing number of HIV infected people. Also there is a problem with systematic HIV treatment and not only treatment of HIV but other opportunistic diseases which are outcome of immunity system failure.

Even though there is a large number of non governmental organizations that are trying to pursue education as well as prevention and psycho-social protection of population, only few deals with one of the essential problems and it is mental health of people who live with HIV. IAN organization, which is very important for realization of mental health and HIV project, has decided to realize this project in cooperation with other organizations and PLHIV community itself in a very sincere and professional manner.

Unfortunately, due to distinctive stigma and discrimination in society as well as lack of confidence in NGOs, inclusion of PLHIV community in activities is not as expected, but some improvement has been noticed.

Because of well-known status and long-term isolation the state didn't recognize the problems in complete so the state doesn't have enough comprehension and consideration for people from PLHIV community.

Due to that fact, the organization which are dealing with these problems started the real fight for better forms of treatments, better quality of life and better comprehensive provision of information to the general public, and also, besides our organization AID +, other organizations which are dealing with this problem associate in to the unique Network of PLHIV organizations in efforts to influence the state bodies and institutions as well as the whole society through the different actions, lobbying and working on better comprehension and acceptance of the problem as well as the people who live with HIV.

Organization AID +, with me as a president, is young organization, 60% of members are people who live with HIV and their goal is to help PLHIV community as much as they can when it comes to treatment, therapy, legal and psycho-social help and also when it comes to socializing, organizing of phone counseling, E-mails, visits to the Clinic for infective diseases and every other form of help.

Most of non-governmental organizations are oriented towards these goals. It is very important to improve and arouse awareness regarding importance of mental health, without it we can't talk about better quality of life. Since this need is not recognized by the state, people who live with HIV as experts because of their experience should be initiators and equal partners to other organizations in conducting activities regarding improvement of mental health of people who live with HIV.