

2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on

# SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

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## Promoting and creating awareness of HIV/AIDS in the black African communities in Luton, UK

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The rate of HIV infections among men who have sex with other men and heterosexual black African people are alarming in Luton. There are 622 people in Luton who are HIV positive accessing care, of which 409 are of Black African origin. In the UK, a leading Pastor in the black African and Caribbean Churches is a very influential figure. His role is pivotal in encouraging HIV/AIDS patients to take prescribed medicine as well as participating in prayer. Sadly, recent investigation by health agencies and the media exposed major concerns that some Pastors are advising their church members not to take a HIV test and to refrain from taking Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART) or Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP). Some Pastors prefer to teach that prayer alone will provide a cure. Those who adhered to this ignorant approach were not well served by their Pastors. In 2011, the BBC reported that Evangelical Christians Pastors claims that prayer alone could cure HIV/AIDS caused three deaths in London. The black African people are advised to have a regular HIV test. However, the uptake of HIV testing is very low due to rejection, shame, fear of contracting HIV and choosing not to know my status syndrome. In 2016, the Action Plus Foundation, UK designed a project aimed at reducing new HIV infection rates by promoting early diagnosis through setting up free and confidential HIV testing clinics, challenging stigma, discrimination and misinformation associated with HIV/AIDS in the black African churches in Luton. Several black African people were tested. We had reactive results and those who had reactive results were referred to our partner HIV specialist at Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) clinics for further investigation and confirmation. All those people who confirmed positive HIV after further investigation is now on medication and receiving support from our partner GUM clinics staff and our trained volunteers and staff in Luton.

### Biography

Nelson Anti is the Program Manager and Public Health Lead for Action Plus Foundation, UK since 2012. He is also the Project Coordinator for Inspirational Charismatic Church, Luton Education Centre. He has completed his Post Graduation in Public Health (MPH), which was awarded to him by the School of Health and Related Research (SchARR) at the University of Sheffield, UK. He has completed his Graduation with Teachers' Certificate A (Math's and Agriculture Sciences) and DBS Computer Literacy pursued from the University of Cape Coast and African Virtual University, Cape Coast, Ghana, respectively. He is a qualified and an accredited Member of Community Safety Scheme in Hertfordshire Borough, UK and a Member of British HIV Association, UK.

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