

# **GIPA (GREATER INVOLVEMENT OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS) PRINCIPLE**

*The success of our national, regional and global programmes requires the greater involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS. [E]nsuring their full involvement ... will ...stimulate the creation of supportive political, legal and social environments.*

*Article 1, Paris AIDS Summit Declaration  
Greater Involvement of People with AIDS (GIPA) Principle, 1994*

## **MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV<sup>1</sup>**

The meaningful participation of people living with HIV/AIDS (PHAs) is fundamental to reducing the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV, preventing the spread of the virus, improving care, improving living conditions and ending the epidemic. The active, meaningful participation of those most affected by HIV offers a number of distinct benefits. For example:

- it recognizes the rights of PHAs to participate in the decisions that affect them;
- it gives the health and social service system valuable advice, knowledge and experience, which results in more effective and more cost-effective interventions;
- it gives those who become involved better access to social support – one of the determinants of health – and people who have a strong social support network enjoy better health and are more able to influence policies and programs that affect their health.

From the beginning of the epidemic in Canada, PHAs and communities at risk have been a powerful force in:

- providing leadership;
- influencing policy;
- planning programs and services;
- advocating for research and access to treatments;
- delivering peer-led programs.

Despite these contributions, the capacity and opportunity of PHAs to participate in and guide HIV programs and services has often been ignored by decision makers and people in authority. Every effort must be made to encourage meaningful participation, particularly by people and groups who have not been actively involved to date and who may lack the needed skills or confidence and need support.

## **GIPA DEFINED<sup>2</sup>**

At its most basic, GIPA means two important things:

- recognizing the important contribution PHAs can make in the response to the epidemic;
- creating space within society for their meaningful involvement and active participation in all aspects of that response.

This contribution can be made at all levels, from the individual to the organizational, and in all sectors from the social and cultural to the economic and political. In particular, the Paris declaration emphasizes the role of networks of PHAs and community-based organizations.

There is no substitute for direct experience, which can be considered a kind of expertise if accompanied by the ability to communicate well. At its most basic, therefore, greater involvement by PHAs means creating a space for individuals to:

- use their experience of living with or being affected by HIV/AIDS in the greater response to the epidemic;
- give a human face and voice to the epidemic in the minds of people not directly touched by it.

---

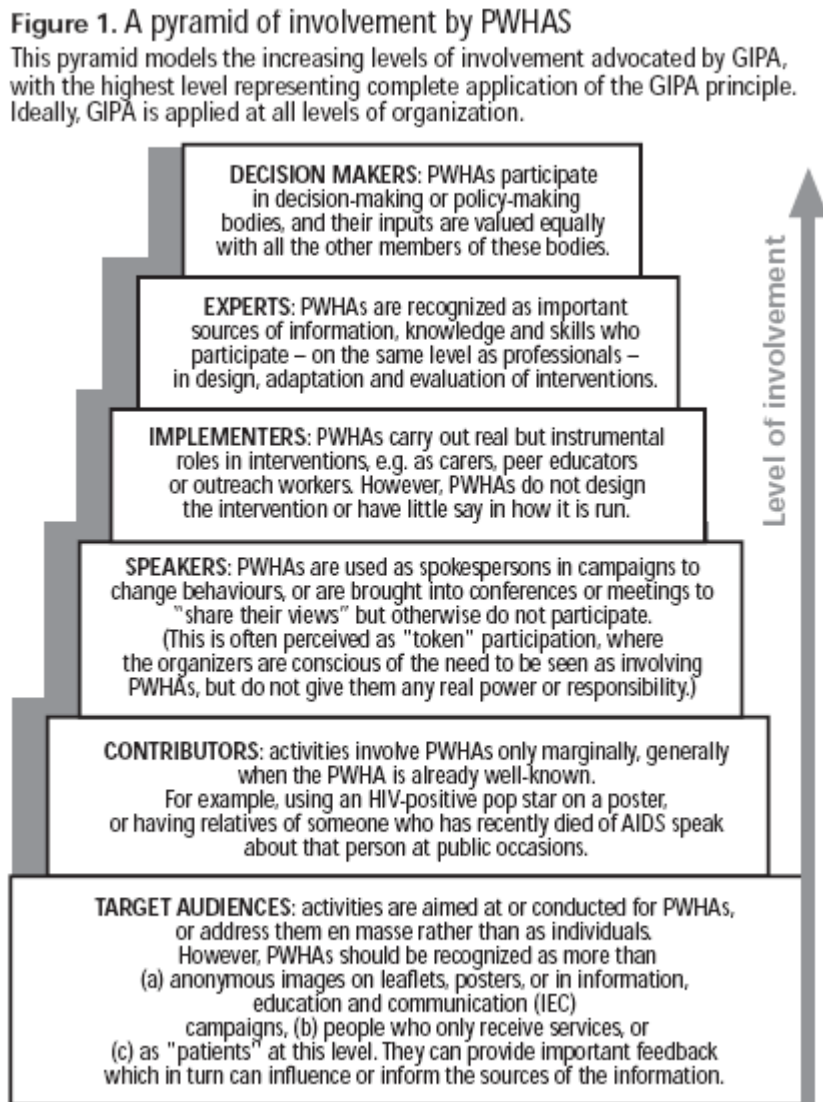
<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Leading Together: Canada Takes Action on HIV/AIDS, (2005-2010)*. Canadian Public Health Association. Ottawa. October 2005. Pg 16.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from *From Principle to Practice: Greater Involvement of People Living with or Affected by HIV/AIDS (GIPA)*. UNAIDS. Geneva. September 1999. Pg 2.

In an operational sense, this involvement should include a variety of roles at many different levels. However, too often the roles open to PHAs at all of these levels are limited to observer or educational functions.

## A PYRAMID OF PHA INVOLVEMENT

Figure 1<sup>3</sup> provides a model of ways in which PHAs (PWHAs in the diagram below) can play a much wider range of roles.



### Further information on GIPA:

[http://www.unaids.org/en/KnowledgeCentre/Resources/FeatureStories/archive/2007/20070330\\_GIPA\\_Policy\\_Brief.asp](http://www.unaids.org/en/KnowledgeCentre/Resources/FeatureStories/archive/2007/20070330_GIPA_Policy_Brief.asp)

<sup>3</sup> From *Principle to Practice: Greater Involvement of People Living with or Affected by HIV/AIDS (GIPA)*. UNAIDS. Geneva. September 1999. Pg 3.