



UPDATE: June 5th, 2017

LEARN Ambassador training workshop and launch event

ATHENA is excited to share an update from our Young Women Lead, Evidence, Advocate, Research, Network (LEARN) project. LEARN is a two-year project funded by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief as part of the DREAMS Innovation Challenge, managed by JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc. LEARN, led by the ATHENA Initiative and their community partners PIPE and ICWEA, aims to promote an HIV prevention agenda informed by meaningful participation of adolescent girls and young women in research.

The last week was full of activities and energy. ATHENA, PIPE, and ICWEA staff along with ten LEARN Ambassadors from Kenya and Uganda travelled to Nairobi to take part in a skills building workshop and LEARN project launch meeting.

LEARN Workshop

We hosted a 5 day residential skills building workshop to train LEARN Ambassadors in participatory action research, leadership and advocacy, and knowledge on human rights, gender equality and sexual and reproductive health.

The workshop aimed to equip LEARN Ambassadors with the skills, knowledge and tools they would need to lead 1-day participatory community dialogues to gather evidence on adolescent girls' and young women's views, engagement, preferences, and knowledge about PrEP and HIV prevention. The Ambassadors are also prepared to translate their findings into an action and advocacy agenda, amplifying adolescent girls' and young women's voices to influence policy actions at the national level.

"The workshop was amazing and we covered a lot. For example, the facilitators taught us more on new [HIV] prevention strategies, leadership skills, how advocacy works, how research is done and many other topics" Agneta , LEARN Ambassador

Determined

Resilient

Empowered

AIDS-Free

Mentored

Safe



We look forward to seeing what these bright and committed young women will do to advance an HIV prevention agenda that is responsive to the needs, priorities and preferences of girls and women in all of their diversity. The Ambassadors are ready to be at the helm of PrEP research and implementation, to inform strategies and ensure that they themselves are contributing to the evidence base.



LEARN Ambassadors holding envelopes with personal messages from ATHENA staff, joined by PIPE and ICWEA staff during a workshop session

LEARN Ambassador Leonida receiving her workshop certificate of completion from ATHENA's Jacqui Stevenson



LEARN Launch

On May 24, along with our partners PIPE and ICWEA, ATHENA hosted a breakfast meeting to launch the project. The meeting was an opportunity to introduce LEARN and provide a platform for LEARN Ambassadors, colleagues, partners and friends to gather and call for:

- Commitment to put adolescent girls and young women at the center and forefront of research and policy enactment
- Investment in leadership opportunities for adolescent girls and young women
- An HIV prevention agenda centered on the holistic needs of adolescent girls and young women

Young Women LEARN is the only young women-led, peer to peer project on PrEP funded through the DREAMS Innovation Challenge. The launch was planned and organized in that ethos, with young women in the lead.

The LEARN Ambassadors opened the morning by speaking about why this project is important to them and other adolescent girls and young women. Their powerful messages set the tone for the rest of the event, and created an atmosphere of enthusiasm for young women’s leadership.

“The breakfast launch was fun and a great opportunity for us as LEARN ambassadors to share our views in relation to our roles in the community for it created a good forum where partners as well could highlight a few issues that affects AGYW and we could borrow ideas from them on how to tackle some of the issues” Belian, LEARN Ambassador

The turnout exceeded our expectations – the room was filled with more than 100 people! We welcomed partners from PEPFAR, DREAMS, JSI, UNAIDS, and community based partners to also reaffirm their commitment to young women’s leadership in HIV prevention strategies and tools.

This is a pivotal moment in the global landscape, when so much attention is focused on the needs, desires and preferences of adolescent girls and young women for HIV prevention. LEARN Ambassadors will power the project’s success, and we couldn’t be more delighted to steer this work that truly recognizes the leadership and role of young women, sets forth a model of good practice, and provides a practical example of the power that can be harnessed when young women are given a platform to champion their rights and health.

Thank you to those who came to support the launch of this important project! We look forward to sharing more exciting updates as LEARN progresses.



Irene, LEARN Ambassador, welcomes guests at the LEARN launch



LEARN Ambassador Catherine shares about the 'Lead' component of LEARN

Patricia, LEARN Ambassador, speaks on the importance of the 'Evidence' component of LEARN



Maxwell Marx from PEPFAR making remarks



Dr. Jantine Jacobi of UNAIDS speaks to the room



Guests having breakfast in a packed room



JSI's Folami Harris commenting on the importance of young women's leadership