

# WOMEN'S NETWORKING ZONE AIDS 2018

➤ STILL ADVANCING WOMEN'S  
RIGHTS: AIDS2018: EVALUATION  
REPORT



## Acknowledgements

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The Women's Networking Zone (WNZ) at the 22nd International AIDS Conference, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 23-27 July 2018 created a space for women's parallel organizing, with a full programme of presentations, discussions, and events platforming women's voices and centering women's experiences.

In this report, we share voices from the WNZ, an overview of the Young Women's Leadership Initiative at AIDS 2018, the #WhatWomenWant campaign – which took the WNZ principle of women's organizing online and around the world – and look ahead to women's organizing in the future.

## Still advancing women's rights

The International AIDS Conference returned to Amsterdam 16 years after a conference that was pivotal in the formation of the International Community of Women Living with HIV (ICW) and in the women's organizing and advocacy in the HIV response. In 1992, women stormed the stage to demand that women's voices, experiences and agency be heard, recognized and upheld in the global HIV response. The below twelve statements summarized the demands made by women living with HIV in 1992.



### ICW 12 STATEMENTS

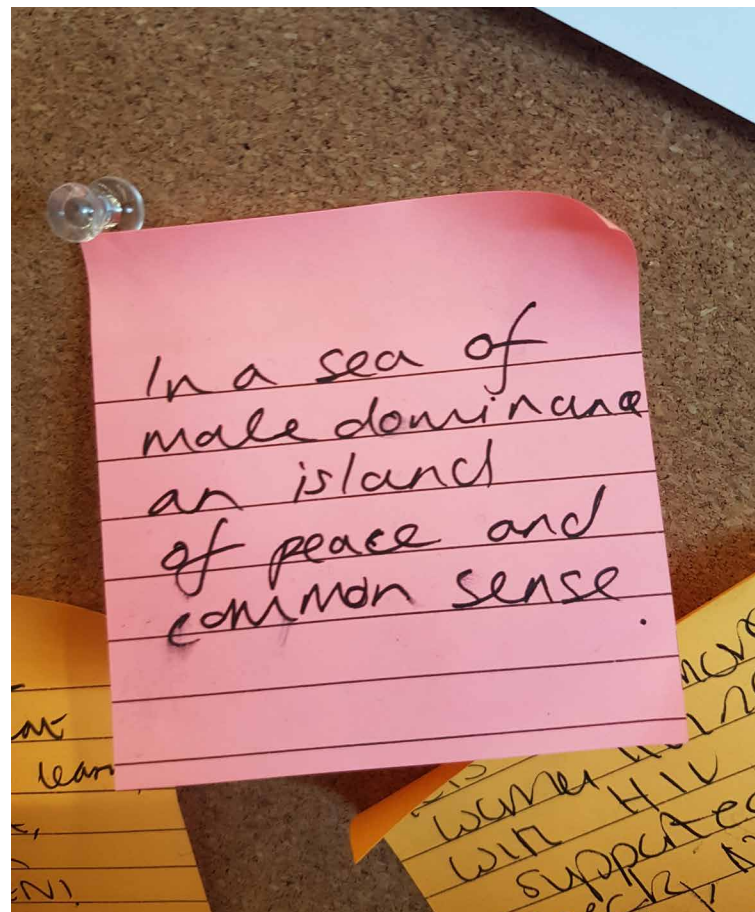
1. WE NEED encouragement and support for the development of self-help groups and networks.
2. WE NEED the media to portray us realistically and not stigmatize us.
3. WE NEED accessible and affordable health care (conventional and complementary) and research into how the virus affects women.
4. WE NEED funding for services to lessen our isolation and meet our needs. All funds directed to us need to be supervised to make sure we get it.
5. WE NEED the right to be respected and supported in our choices about reproduction. This includes the right to have children and the right not to have children.
6. WE NEED recognition of the right of our children and orphans to be cared for and of the importance of our role as parents.
7. WE NEED education and training of health care providers and the community at large about women's risk and our needs. Up-to-date, accurate information concerning all issues about women living with HIV/AIDS should be easily and freely available.
8. WE NEED recognition of the fundamental human rights of all women living with HIV/AIDS, particularly women in prisons, drug users and sex workers. These fundamental rights should include the right to housing, employment and travel without restrictions.
9. WE NEED research into female infectivity, including woman to woman transmission, recognition of and support for lesbians living with HIV/AIDS.
10. WE NEED decision making power and consultation on all levels of policy and programmes affecting us.
11. WE NEED economic support for women living with HIV/AIDS in developing countries to enable them to be self-sufficient and independent.
12. WE NEED any definition of AIDS to include symptoms and clinical manifestations specific to women.

Twenty six years on, many of these demands are still to be met and women continue to organize, advocate and agitate for change.

Born out of women's parallel organizing at the Durban International AIDS Conference in 2000, the Women's Networking Zone (WNZ) is a community-focused forum running parallel to international and regional AIDS conferences, among other policy fora. We looked to the International AIDS Conference in Amsterdam 2018 as a key opportunity to celebrate and re-galvanize the women's rights and HIV movement that has mobilized around the WNZ over the last 18 years. From its inception in Durban, South Africa, in 2000, the WNZ has successfully achieved mobilization of women and different stakeholders on key issues, including the engagement and coordination of young women into the movement and cross generational dialogue that is so critical for our movement.

Over the last 18 years, the WNZ has become a globally recognized and valued space for democratic and inclusive women's parallel organizing, and for bringing together local, regional, and global perspectives, as well as for bridging the gender, human rights, HIV, and sexual and reproductive health and rights communities. The WNZ at AIDS 2018, under the theme of 'Still Advancing Women's Rights', created an opportunity to unite women locally, regionally and globally, to mark the advances made through women's collective organizing since the year 2000, and to platform a forward looking agenda of innovative community-building and advocacy, in order to:

- Create a vibrant, inclusive space to ensure the knowledge, expertise, and opportunities of these conferences are accessible to and benefit from engagement of women from around the globe and the regional European community, many of whom would otherwise be excluded due to prohibitive registration costs
- Spotlight and celebrate the diversity of women and girls, and showcase community-led and -driven innovation
- Ensure women's priorities and expertise are visible
- Advance a comprehensive, and inclusive women's and human rights agenda
- Champion the leadership of women living with HIV, particularly young women
- Provide a platform to engage community members, researchers, donors and policy makers in cross-community dialogue and exchange, deepen our learning and analysis, and strengthen local and global partnerships
- Highlight structural factors such as poverty, sexism, racism, and gender based violence as a cause and consequence of HIV; women's sexual and reproductive health and rights; female controlled prevention tools; and the rights of women in all their diversities and across their life cycles, who face multiple forms of gender-based violence



We do not tell our stories to be victims – we share our stories so that we know where we've been, and where we need to go."

LILIAN MWOREKO



Our overall vision for WNZ at AIDS 2018 was to create an all-inclusive, vibrant space that positions a revitalized, re-galvanized united women’s movement firmly at the center of the HIV response, and within the new framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and more specifically Universal Health Care. We wish to reflect and build on the last 18 years of the Women’s Networking Zone, reviewing and revisiting key lessons learnt from past convening, which will help create steps to move forward and to celebrate the parallel women’s organizing that is integral to an effective HIV response. This WNZ was an opportunity to learn from and share our experiences, reassess the landscape, and develop a collective and progressive agenda that is poised to keep the centrality of women and girls’ contribution on the HIV and health response visible.

We see an ever-increasing need and opportunity today for women and girls, who are living with or the most affected by HIV to monitor, engage, and inform HIV policy, program development, research, development of new technologies, and rollout of new tools. We need transformative feminist leadership now more than ever. Further, we wanted to celebrate the founders of the International Community of Women Living with HIV and the brave women who came together at the conference in Amsterdam in 1992.



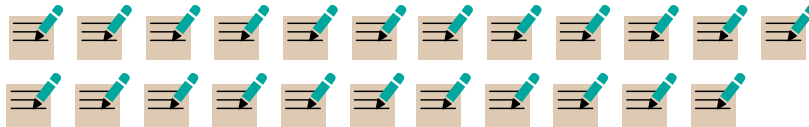
“ The WNZ is an opportunity for young women to express their ideas, to share their experiences, to share their views, to share what challenges they face in the field and share their leadership and what opportunities they’ve gotten in being leaders and representing the young girls.”

JULIET, UGANDA

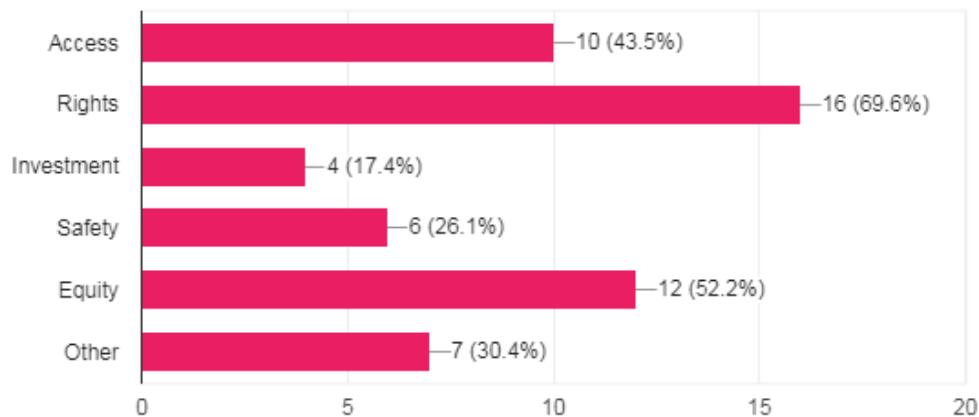
## Women's Networking Zone program

The WNZ at AIDS 2018 featured a full program of panel sessions, workshops, and discussions. Proposals for sessions were invited from researchers, advocates, activists, artists, programmers, policy specialists, networks, organizations and individuals. An open call was issued through the ATHENA list-serv, and the newsletters, networks and social media of steering group partners. Proposals were submitted through a Google form, and were evaluated by a review committee formed of steering committee members, who evaluated proposals for quality, interest and to ensure diversity across the WNZ program.

In total, 23 proposals were submitted from 21 different lead organizations.



### Proposers were asked to identify the main subject area of their proposed session

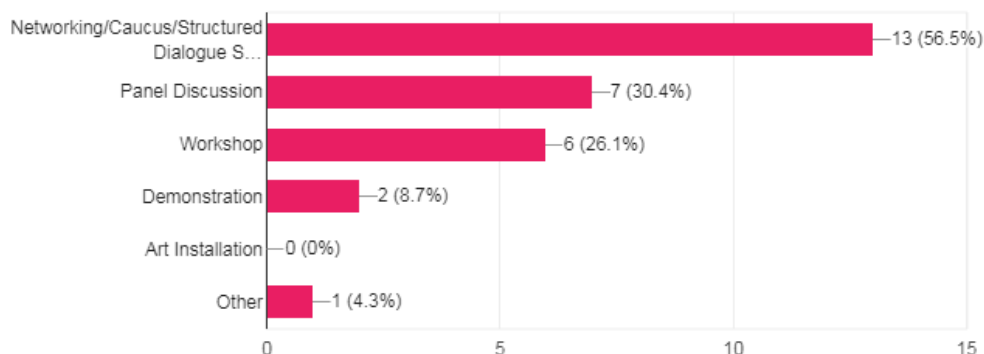


All session proposals were identified as being led by or of special relevance to women living with HIV and 82% as led by or of special relevance to young women.

# 82%

Proportion of sessions reported as having special relevance to young women

### The most common session type being networking or structured dialogue session



Proposers were asked to identify the objectives of their session, target audience, and format, as well as speakers and technical requirements. This supported evaluation of proposals and decision-making on shaping the programme as well as ensuring that presenters were well-supported.

Participants and visitors to the WNZ were invited to share their comments and feedback on the space and sessions they had attended, through a notice board and mini interviews with the Monitoring and Evaluation lead for the WNZ. This is what they had to say:

- *A space for women only is vital – we are the minority represented.*
- *When we meet we are more than one voice, we are more united.*
- *A great place – thank you.*
- *What Women Want: meaningful engagement; boys to be empowered to reduce socialization norms; a seat at the table to be able to contribute.*
- *It's time to stop HIV together.*
- *To have a networking zone means I have a place to go to connect. This keeps me safe.*
- *Great work WNZ space, very informative. Struggle continues.*
- *Yet the majority living with HIV – these spaces empower us and give strength to fight for our rights.*
- *The WNZ is a great space to learn, connect, focus on WOMEN! Thank you.*
- *There is a lot of information and support for women. Do you have fact sheet on economic empowerment for women?*
- *In a sea of male dominance an island of peace and common sense.*
- *Let's have more women living with HIV supported to speak, network and attend the conference.*



“ [asked about the WNZ at AIDS 2020] We definitely shouldn't have it [the International AIDS Conference] in the United States.<sup>1</sup> That is what we shouldn't do. But what we should continue to do is to open up the floor and to open up our hearts and our minds, and to see all of us as women that identify as women and not be reduced to our body parts. And then continue to have brave spaces where we can continue to have this open dialogue. There is nowhere said that it is going to be easy but it is definitely going to be worthwhile.”

OCTAVIA, USA

“ The priority issue is giving a chance to young women to make a choice, deciding on programs that work best for them, and two, making decisions on where money should be put... There is quite a lot around networking, getting to know who does what, which innovations people have on table, what are the different programmes that seem to be so successful in the main HIV arena. And also it's a safe space where actually people speak up, especially women living with HIV, where they can speak about and share their experiences and talk about what works best for us as women living with HIV. And also to learn from others.”

HAJJARAH, UGANDA

1. The International AIDS Society is planning to hold the AIDS 2020 conference in San Francisco, a decision many activists have opposed based on the political situation under President Trump and concerns about the impact on access to and safety at the conference for participants from marginalized communities.

## Amsterdam revisited – 26 years on – back to the birthplace of ICW: The Women’s Networking Zone: standing on the shoulders of giants

BY ALICE WELBOURN



The Women’s Networking Zone at the 22nd International AIDS Conference in Amsterdam is a time both for sadness and for celebration. At the opening welcome ceremony, we remembered with deep sadness all the women and girls who have acquired HIV and died over the years from AIDS-related illness.

We also celebrated the return to the birthplace of the International Community of Women living with HIV (ICW), which was created in Amsterdam 22 years ago, in 1992, when a group of courageous women stormed the stage and claimed their rights to their voices in a hitherto all male conference. At the WNZ in Amsterdam we remembered how we all stand on the shoulders of those giants, some of whom are still alive and joined us at the opening. Thus this is a time both for sadness and celebration.

### Why sadness?

Sadness because, there are still 36.7 million people in the world with HIV, of whom 51% are female.<sup>2</sup> Sadness because, as the conference banners at Amsterdam airport declared, there are still 1 million people a year dying from AIDS-related illnesses – even more than the 900,000 population of Amsterdam.

Sadness because, despite enormous concerted efforts over the years, there is still a gender blankness at the centre of the storm. This void continues to ignore or deny the immense inequalities of powerlessness and poverty, which make it so unsafe for women and girls to share that they are facing violence or have HIV with those around them.

Intimate partner violence increases women’s and girls’ vulnerability to acquiring HIV (and chlamydia, syphilis and gonorrhoea) by a factor of 1.5.<sup>3</sup> In turn, many women and girls, once they acquire HIV, experience either first-time violence or increased violence from partners, family or community members. And for the first time, many women can experience structural violence in healthcare settings,<sup>4</sup> where they can find themselves vilified for having a disease.

Women living with HIV also experience increased levels of mental ill-health.<sup>5</sup> Yet major policies and programs still fail to realize this vicious triangle of co-morbidities of HIV, violence against women, and mental health issues, which together conspire to limit women’s access to life-saving anti-retroviral medication, for themselves – or for their children if they have them. This is in part because conventional healthcare does not deal easily with healthcare issues which can’t be treated by pills. Violence against women and mental ill health are instead immense psycho-social issues which require a very different set of response skills from those normally taught in medical or nursing schools.

2. [http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media\\_asset/20170720\\_Data\\_book\\_2017\\_en.pdf](http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/20170720_Data_book_2017_en.pdf)

3. World Health Organization, the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, South African Medical Research Council Global (2013), *Global and regional estimates of violence against women: Prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence*. <http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/en/index.html>

4. Orza et al (2015), *JIAS*. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.7448/IAS.18.6.20285>

5. Orza et al (2015), *JIAS*. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.7448/IAS.18.6.20289>



# WOMEN'S



# HUMAN RIGHTS

Thanks to this, far too many girls and women have died over the years, from AIDS-related illnesses, often through lacking the willpower to keep going when so much seems to conspire against them.

### Why celebration?

In coming back to Amsterdam, it is also an opportunity to celebrate the remarkable willpower and resilience of women living with HIV who, in 1992, stormed the main stage of the AIDS conference to declare that women too had – and have – a right to have their issues addressed at the conference; that women too were acquiring HIV and dying; and that women too could be courageous activists.

The Women's Networking Zone in the free parallel conference, held in the Global Village, has been described as "where the real conference takes place". Started in 2000 as a "Women at Durban" parallel process, it is recognized as a hub for knowledge sharing, advocacy, and critical dialogues around emerging issues at International AIDS Conferences and other key HIV research and policy fora, including the IAS HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment, and Prevention Conference and ICASA.

The WNZ operates as a virtual and physical convening entity, utilizing collaborative, inclusive, and democratizing processes to establish an agenda of priority issues, build coalitions and networks, and capacitate, strengthen, and spotlight the leadership of women and young women living with and affected by HIV, thereby responding to Recommendation 3 of UNAIDS Agenda For Women, Girls, Gender Equality And HIV, to champion leadership for an enabling environment that promotes and protects women's and girls' human rights and their empowerment, in the context of HIV, through increased advocacy and capacity and adequate resources.

The WNZ at Amsterdam offered many diverse sessions in a packed agenda, hosted by women's groups from around the world throughout the week. There was a special stream focusing on the rights of and issues faced by young women, to celebrate also a new generation of fierce dynamic activism. Whilst standing on the shoulders of giants, the next generation are also a powerful force for change.



I feel like women's networking spaces are very crucial

because we have to create cohesive spaces where we can talk about bodily autonomy, reproductive justice, how that impacts our lives, our communities. So it's really important that we are in spaces where we can really start to strategize each other and also to uplift each other."

KIARA, USA





## Opening of Women's Networking Zone

BY JANE SHEPHERD

There was a buzz at the opening of the WNZ. Word had got out that some of the original founders of ICW had been invited. Would they turn up – these giants of activism on whose shoulders we stand? Would our heroes stride through the Global Village, towering over us, to impart wise words? They arrived to hugs and wide smiles and in spite of them being normal human beings, it still felt extraordinary. Suddenly, there was a visible thread that reached back through time to 1992 when these women took to the stage at the Amsterdam AIDS conference to call time on being ignored in the AIDS response. It was a thread that connected us to the present and the amazing work young and new activists are doing to advance the rights of women living with HIV. It was a powerful moment because there have been so few opportunities to remember our history and the women who played such a key part. So few of us survived, so little has been documented – there was never time – and the contribution of women living with HIV has been subsumed by the male narrative of AIDS activism.

The evening was one of reunions, retirements and remembering. Kate Thomson spoke about the arc of women's activism and the work still to be done – many of the original ICW 12 Statements remain unmet.<sup>6</sup> We gave thanks to Alice Welbourn who is retiring from her work with Salamander Trust, leaving a legacy of pioneering collaborative work on the SRHR of women living with HIV. Other key activists were called up – those who have tirelessly given their energy and passion to the women's HIV movement for decades (see below). It felt so good and necessary to honor and give thanks. But, the roll call also has to include all those who do not have the resources to travel to conferences, who mobilize for change at grassroots levels and go unacknowledged or who work at the quieter end of activism.

The telling of our history, acknowledging our work and celebrating our beautiful and diverse community are all part of the process of movement-building and made the WNZ opening such a key event for women activists at AIDS2018.



6. ICW 12 Statements can be found at: [www.iamicw.org/our-organization/history](http://www.iamicw.org/our-organization/history).

## Regional organizing of women living with HIV in Europe



The Eurasian Women's Network on AIDS played a central role in the WNZ design, preparations and convening, and led regional organizing of women living with HIV in Europe.

At AIDS 2018, Eurasian Women's Network on AIDS (EWNA) was represented by 19 participants from 6 countries in the region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Ukraine, Russia, Armenia, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan.

To coordinate participants of the conference, an electronic listserv and a Facebook group were created, in which the topics of the sessions proposed for the Global Village, their content and conduct were discussed. The representatives of the EWNA initiated and held 5 sessions:

1. Give birth and die. What happens with the treatment adherence of an HIV-positive woman after the birth of a child
2. Campaigns against gender-based violence organized by women living with HIV
3. Sexual and reproductive health of women from key groups in the EECA region
4. Women's Leadership and Sustainable Development Goals (participation in development and support – UN Women Office in Ukraine)
5. Shadow Reports (participation in development and support – EECA Networking zone ActivEAST)

The participants of the EWNA took part in the symposium **Beyond Blame** dedicated to the criminalization of HIV and presented the experience and results of legislation analysis in the EECA region. In addition, the topic of criminalization was raised by EWNA in three other thematic sessions held in the Global Village.

In addition to the WNZ, EWNA also co-organized the networking zone ActivEast, the location of the regional campaign "**Chase the Virus, Not People**".

The main information on the preparation of the conference, news directly from the conference and a report on participation was published on the organization's **Facebook page**. In total, starting from June 28, 34 publications related to AIDS2018 were made, 9 of them campaigns of community networks 'Chase the virus, not people!'. For the sessions initiated and conducted by the EWNA, events were created on the Facebook page.

During the conference, EWNA published a daily review of participation. A week after the closure of the conference, a **full review** of the EWNA participation in AIDS 2018 was published on the website, on the Facebook page and distributed through partners' listservs. On the organization's website, a **designated page** was dedicated to the AIDS2018 conference. The header of the main page of the website has been changed to an image with a slogan that was used to visualize EWNA as a women's network organization.





# #WHAT WOMEN AND GIRLS WANT

What Women want

- > Meaningful engagement
- > Boys to be empowered to reduce socialisation norms.
- > A seat at the table to be able to contribute.

!!  
Thought





## #WhatWomenWant at AIDS 2018

ATHENA launched the #WhatWomenWant campaign with women's civil society in May 2016 to amplify women's voices, highlight our realities, and power our solutions. The campaign mobilizes advocates and thought leaders across issues of gender equality, HIV, gender based violence, women's rights, and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for women in all of our diversity, to expand who is in the conversation and who has access to it.

The WNZ and #WhatWomenWant are perfect partners – both are spaces created by and for women from around the globe and across communities to come together to share with each other, learn from each other and create stronger platforms by amplifying each other's voices.

The campaign brought the WNZ to the world, with tweets and other social media sharing from sessions, highlighting advocacy messages and sharing women's priorities.

During AIDS 2018, the #WhatWomenWant hashtag was tweeted by 535 people in 1,272 tweets, making 4,647,831 impressions and reaching 2,246,897 people.

#WhatWomenWant young women leaders were hard at work building the movement in every corner of the conference and beyond. Advocacy, online and in person, coalesced around these eight asks shared by ATHENA Initiative:

1. #WhatWomenWant is sustainable, meaningful investment in women, including funding women-led civil society and young women-led initiatives and funding that works, investing in their leadership, ideas and organizations.
2. #WhatWomenWant is accountability to ensure that HIV and gender equality commitments are translated into sustained and meaningful change.
3. #WhatWomenWant is consultation to put women at the center of policies, programmes, research, strategies and initiatives.
4. #WhatWomenWant is action to implement commitments made by governments and other duty bearers towards women and girls.
5. #WhatWomenWant is a research agenda that is driven and led by women in all our diversity.
6. #WhatWomenWant is gender equality, human rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights for ALL women in all our diversity.
7. #WhatWomenWant is young women's leadership, investing in programmes and mentoring to ensure young women are #READYtoLead.
8. #WhatWomenWant is comprehensive sexuality education and youth-friendly services.

## #WhatWomenWant Young Feminist Blog Series

The young feminist blog series is a platform for young women leaders to share their priorities, expertise and advocacy, as part of the #WhatWomenWant campaign. Three young women leaders, one who participated in the AIDS 2018 conference and two who were unable to, have written this special blog series to highlight their advocacy priorities for and beyond the International AIDS Conference.

Young feminist blog series

### What young women and girls want

BY WINNY OBURE

Young women and girls in Kiambiu [a slum area in Nairobi, Kenya] are vulnerable to HIV, AIDS and sexual and gender-based violence from their partners and community because of the nature of the environment and their upbringing. In the informal settlements, rape and defilement is normalized when families of survivors accept kangaroo courts or accept bribes to drop charges against the perpetrators. Most gender-based violations don't actually get reported because survivors are almost sure no action will be taken against the offenders. For the few cases that make it past reporting at police stations, the justice system takes a very long time, which is time-costing, discouraging and tedious. Often, witnesses including family members pull out at this time and disassociate from the process, which affects the cases heavily. Many young women are abused in relationships in part due to financial dependence on their partners, and fear of being stigmatized and stereotyped by the community for lack of resilience to overcome the struggles in relationships as the culture dictates. The majority of young women have very little or no education, which makes it difficult to get employment or skills to be able to get an income.

#WhatWomenWant is leadership trainings and mentorship to be confident and bold in articulating their issues. They want education including comprehensive sexuality education to know, understand, and advocate for access and affordability of quality sexual and reproductive health, rights and services. We need an environment that respects women and girls' rights and take seriously our concerns. Women want safe spaces to share their experiences without fear and discrimination. Justice is non-negotiable and every woman and girl wants and deserves to live their life to the fullest without any worries or fear.

Women and girls want to be capacity-built to run for political office, to be part of the policy making processes both at the community, national, regional and international spaces.

Women's rights are human rights that are enshrined in our Constitution 2010 and other international declarations that Kenya has ratified. What we want now is inclusion in reviewing and strengthening these laws and policies including in the community projects targeting adolescent girls and women at every stage from the ideation, to implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Choice is what women want. To decide the direction of their lives and their sexual and reproductive health including whether or not they want to have children, when to have them and the spacing. During the AIDS 2018 conference in Amsterdam, young women in Kiambiu followed very keenly the discussions on online social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook and one major concern was the accountability aspect of the leaders who attend these kinds of conferences on our behalf. Women want accountability and transparency of all the representatives who make it to the high level platforms. We want reports and research documents coming from the conferences translated into the language that we understand and materials distributed to young women and girls at the

grassroots so we can also follow up with commitments our countries make and hold them accountable.

Some young women choose to do sex work or become strippers in order to support themselves financially and support their families. These women want to be recognized and respected for the work they have chosen. They want to be provided with HIV prevention drugs, i.e. PrEP, HIV treatment/anti-retroviral therapy for people who are HIV-positive and other sexual and reproductive health including contraceptives to make their work environment safer. They want advocacy skills to be able to defend themselves when they are threatened or abused by their clients. When they know their rights, they will be better placed to advocate for themselves.

Young women and girls in advocacy and HIV spaces want self-care to be part of the broader programs that are designed for them. This will enable more mindfulness and mental stability to be able to push our agenda forward and to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

### Young feminist blog series

#### **Building bridges in the HIV response – Can young women do something?**

BY NYASHA SITHOLE

Participating at the International AIDS Conference can be very overwhelming especially for young people attending for the first time. However, having mentors who can guide you all the way can make the experience worthwhile. With the question, 'Can young women do something in breaking barriers and building bridges in the global HIV and AIDS response?' one cannot help but reflect on personal experiences during the conference.

Globally HIV has the face of girls and women, the most affected population due to structural, economic, cultural, religious and social barriers that exist in communities. However, all is not lost as during the AIDS Conference there is a new cohort of girls and young women who are striving through advocacy and research to break these barriers. I had the experience of meeting different groups of young women from all over the world at the Women's Networking Zone for an hour every day during the conference days, for the Young Women's Leadership Initiative.

The discussions ranged from advocacy and leadership, mentorship, the role of young women in ending AIDS and in research, meaningful participation and engagement, access to SRHR and comprehensive sexuality education. Of importance was how the young women, despite coming from different parts of the world, all agreed that it was time to change the response to accommodate the needs of girls and women, and to shout for space for girls and women in being 'pen holders' in drafting policies and programmes at community, national, regional and international levels. Young women demonstrated a level of energy and enthusiasm to make a change, which if supported will ensure that global goals of ending AIDS by 2030 are met.

Some of the key asks by young women include:

- Serious investment in advancing human rights of child brides.
- Sexuality education that is not culturally driven, CSE should be human rights driven.
- To be recognized as leaders.
- Autonomy and space to make decisions.
- Protection from violence, freedom of choice and equal access to prevention methods and meaningful involvement.

Young feminist blog series

## High rates of pregnancies and HIV in Homa Bay among adolescent girls and young women

BY BELIANNE ONYANGO

Homa Bay County has some of the highest rates in Kenya of HIV and of pregnancy among adolescent girls and young women. HIV and teenage pregnancy has really affected the lives of many adolescent girls and young women in various ways, yet these are issues with solutions.

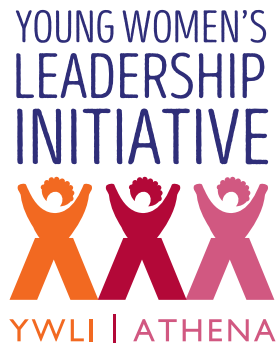
A numbers of factors have been recognized to be contributing to these problems. During my engagement as a LEARN Ambassador with young women in safe space meetings as part of ATHENA's Young Women LEARN project, different issues have come out: peer influence among young people, ignorance, poverty, child abuse, lack of information on sexual and reproductive health and rights and HIV, and poor parenting among other factors. Adolescent girls and young women realize these issues must be addressed to prevent future harm to their lives. Whenever they were giving examples from the lessons they've learnt from other adolescent girls and young women who have been affected by HIV or early pregnancy, they were talking of extreme poverty, early marriages, risky methods of abortion, school-drop out and so on.

To manage and prevent the re-occurrence of these challenges to other adolescent girls and young women, there is a need to introduce sexual and reproductive health education both outside and inside secondary schools where they can get the messages uniformly. Adolescent girls and young women also require easy access to contraceptives. Education to recognize gender-based violence is critical, as many young women do not know different forms of GBV so some face it unknowingly, and stay with cases unreported and no action taken because of a lack of information. There is also a need to create and develop youth-friendly services where adolescent girls and young women can get services freely without any fear and services be also offered by fellow young women who understand them best. Adolescent girls and young women should know their rights and should always be on the fore front of condemning the acts that affects them negatively in regards to HIV and SRHR. Finally, there is a need for adolescent girls and young women to have role models to help them overcome the impact of their disadvantaged backgrounds to be better able to prevent HIV acquisition and early pregnancy and protect them from exploitation by men.

In conclusion, PrEP and SRHR information are key to all adolescent girls and young women, both in and out of school because they face similar challenges – all adolescent girls and young women should have BOLD say on matters pertaining to their life.



## Young Women's Leadership Initiative



The Young Women's Leadership Initiative (YWLI) is a programme of the ATHENA Initiative. It is an ongoing programme of virtual organizing and support and one that ATHENA also implements in-person at international and regional conferences and advocacy platforms, and was pleased to implement at AIDS 2018 in partnership with the WNZ.

The YWLI was first developed by ATHENA in 2011, with support from UNAIDS, and has grown to support young women's advocacy and leadership in local, regional and global spaces and conferences. Participants in the YWLI have received support and skills-building on leadership, mentoring, advocacy, research, sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender, human rights and health.

Recognizing the need for adolescent girls and young women to actively participate and lead in the HIV response, ATHENA has developed an evolving mentorship strategy, which includes key elements of:

- Mentorship and institutional support from ATHENA
- Peer mentorship among young women living with HIV
- Inter-generational mentorship
- Cross-movement mentorship.

Through YWLI ATHENA has developed spaces and strategies to create and support meaningful engagement in the HIV response by providing adolescent girls and young women:

- Support to engage in national, regional, and international policy fora
- Opportunities as country focal points to shape, inform and implement in-country project work
- Support to conduct and participate in community dialogues
- Opportunities on global reference groups alongside more experienced women living with HIV activists
- Advocating for and supporting the participation of young women in workshops, side events, panels and ATHENA-led spaces including the WNZ at international conferences.

### **YWLI Power Hour**

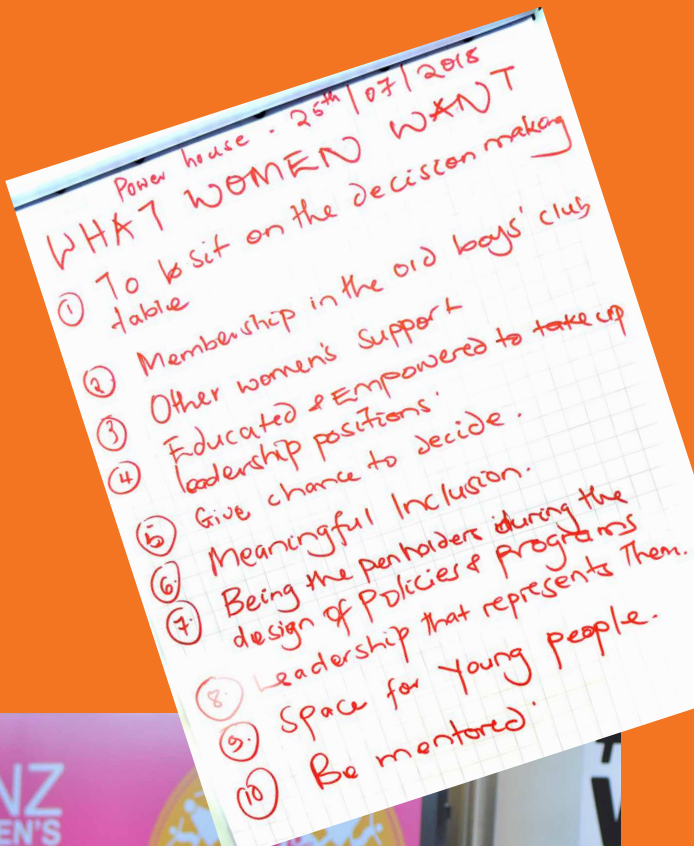
Every day during the 2018 International AIDS Conference, ATHENA hosted a YWLI Power Hour in the WNZ. This was a space to learn from peers and mentors, discuss key issues, develop advocacy priorities and messages and benefit from skills-building and support. All young women aged between 16 and 28 were invited and welcome to join. The aim was to provide a mentored, coordinated experience at AIDS 2018 bringing together, creating space for, and promoting dialogue with young women leaders. Between 8 and 22 young women participated in each session, and featured speakers included:

- Gunilla Carlsson, Deputy Executive Director of UNAIDS, in a session on leadership, gender equity and mentorship
- Silvia Petretti, joint CEO of Positively UK, in a session on advocacy for women living with HIV, the funding landscape for women-led organizations and revitalizing demands for women's health and rights
- Nyasha Sithole, National Trainer for ATHENA in Zimbabwe, in a session on comprehensive sexuality education



Young women attending the power hours shared their advocacy priorities and worked together to develop messaging to take into conference sessions, meetings and discussions.

The YWLI also reached out beyond the conference walls, inviting young women leaders around the world to share their voices and priorities in memes that were actively shared through the #WhatWomenWant campaign, ATHENA's social media and by YWLI social media champions.



## Ulemu Kanyongolo: Malawi

"Good places to get sexual reproductive health information are clinics, as well as trusted resources on the internet or books. However, if the information in the clinics is to be effectively disseminated, the health personnel must be willing to provide it to young women, and to have open dialogue about it. Often, when young women go to seek out such information, they feel uncomfortable and are unable to open up and in effect do not get the information they really need. Therefore, health personnel should be properly trained on dealing with young women and girls."

#WHATWOMENWANT @WHATGIRLSWANT @AIDS2018 ATHENA NETWORK !



## Susan Mlenga: Malawi

"Properly trained officers are needed in clinics nowadays. They need to make young ladies feel more at home when giving out advice rather than judging their actions or their current state."

"To ensure that adolescent girls and young women have access to sanitary pads, focus should not only be on formal education but on informal education because some girls do not have the privilege to go to school even if education in their area is free. So I strongly believe that civic education is necessary and important."

"I believe that similar age-based interventions would make adolescent girls and young women respectively, freely express themselves and thus provide in-depth contributions on how to tackle what they are facing free from judgment or shame."

#WHATWOMENWANT #WHATGIRLSWANT @AIDS2018 ATHENA NETWORK!



## Madeleine Potani: Malawi

"SEX should no longer be considered a taboo to speak of. SEX should be a topic of discussion, especially here in African societies. The only reason many young girls get into difficult situations such as early pregnancies or being infected with STI's and HIV is because they lack appropriate knowledge. Young girls are using risky methods of inducing abortion because many of them have no adults around them who can give them appropriate advice for their situation. Young girls are not allowed to freely speak of sex and this is ruining many girls lives. We need to change this."

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"Malawians need to understand that times have changed. What were once considered as taboo topics such as SEX and MENSTRUAL issues are no longer taboo topics. More youth in our generation would like to speak more about these issues! Periods happen to every woman out there. Why do we act like it is a strange phenomenon? Once it has been normalized and people come to accept that these things exist, we can work hand in hand to ensure that basic needs such as sanitary pads are made available for girls in our generation."

"We need a culture shift. Boys in secondary school need to understand that periods are a normal thing and will thereafter stop ostracizing and harrassing girls when they have their period. It begins with the girls, the system, the culture and the teachers. Imagine a world where a girl would be able to get her pad out of her bag and carry it in her hands without any shame, go to the washroom and change? Oh what a joy that will be! Girls need to be stronger minded to be able to respond with "that is my pad, I am on my period" when asked. That is how change will come. Otherise if everyone makes it seem like it is a sinful thing, then obviously the attitude towards periods will remain the same."

#WHATWOMENWANT #WHATGIRLSWANT @AIDS2018 ATHENA NETWORK



## Clairissa Magombo: Malawi

## Andile Ndlovu: Zimbabwe

"Honestly, i know if the government and the international community put aside a budget for sanitary wear products just as they have done for condom distribution, it would boost the morale and self-esteem of all young girls and women, especially females from vulnerable homes which constitute the higher population as compared to their male counterparts."

"In my opinion, this is how we can include adolescent girls and young women in the development of strong HIV prevention programs; having an online/media program run via social media free-of-charge where women's innovative ideas can be shared and processed for implementation programs."

#WHATWOMENWANT #WHATGIRLSWANT @AIDS2018 ATHENA NETWORK !



Calling  
Young Women  
Ages 16-28

YOUNG WOMEN'S  
LEADERSHIP  
INITIATIVE

YOUNG WOMEN'S  
LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE  
@ AIDS2018

Expand Your Skills  
Advocacy, Gender Equity  
HIV, SRHR & Research

July 23-26  
12:30-1:30 p.m.  
Women's  
Networking Zone

ATHENA  
INITIATIVE



## REFLECTIONS ON THE YWLI FROM A YOUNG WOMAN LEADER

We asked Nyasha Sithole, a #WhatWomenWant champion and YWLI lead mentor, and member of the ATHENA Initiative team, to reflect on her experiences with the YWLI.

*How did you hear about the YWLI and how long have you been involved?*

I was more involved during the #WhatWomenWant campaign and International AIDS Conference. I've been involved for about a year since 2017.

*How have you been involved?*

I participated in the #WhatWomenWant campaign as a regional representative and in submitting blogs and I also co-facilitated the YWLI Power Hour Sessions at AIDS 2018 at the WNZ.

*How has the YWLI and ATHENA supported your advocacy?*

Being a co-facilitator with an ATHENA team member for YWLI Power hour sessions during AIDS 2018 ignited my appreciation for working with girls and young women. It also enhanced my understanding on feminism, the role of young women in the HIV response and also I gained an appreciation on the wealth of knowledge and energy that young women have. More than ever I am convinced that my career should focus on improving access to health for girls and women.

*Is there any learning that you could attribute to ATHENA or the YWLI – or a different way of thinking?*

Yes, being part of ATHENA has enabled me to learn on feminism, its attributes and role of feminism in advocacy. I used to shun away from being called a feminist though my previous work with girls and women but now I am confident enough to carry that title.

*Has your involvement with ATHENA/YWLI opened up opportunities that you feel they wouldn't have had otherwise?*

Yes, working with ATHENA has opened an opportunity for me to be National Trainer for the READY To Lead project in Zimbabwe. All thanks to the mentorship received from ATHENA team, I am responsible for training other young women on advocacy, leadership and mentorship in my country.

*Have you gained anything else from the YWLI and ATHENA?*

Mentorship and access to opportunities for my career growth are most valuable things I have gained from

ATHENA to date. ATHENA recognizes the importance of valuing time spent on working in advocacy and ensures that it's worth the effort by providing mentorship support and adequate resources to make an impact.

I have been able to participate and represent young women in high level meetings with UNAIDS Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director and take part in discussions around prevention and management of sexual harassment. This space allowed me to express the needs of young women from all over the world around sexual harassment and bring lived realities to the table to prompt for action at all levels.

Participating in these spaces with ATHENA team, they always make sure they support polishing your advocacy issues in order to make effective and meaningful contributions.

*How has the YWLI impacted you?*

Before I engaged with ATHENA I was not confident of my advocacy skills. Since I have been engaged with ATHENA I feel the power within me unleashing, I feel empowered and I feel I can make change through advocacy.

*Looking ahead, would you like to continue to be part of the YWLI?*

Yes, through creation of a formal fellowship for YWL and through social media and where possible when participating at international events.

*What do you see as the main priority issues for women, girls and gender equality (in the context of HIV) moving forward?*

There is need for continued capacity building of YWL on advocacy, policy drafting and political engagement to advance the rights of girls and women.

*What do you think young women and adolescent girls need most to live happy, healthy and fulfilled lives?*

I believe that in order to live happy, healthy and fulfilled lives girls and young women need comprehensive access to HIV and SRHR information and commodities and also recognition on work done.

*How can women and girls in all of their diversity and across the life cycle be supported to make and enact decisions that advance their health and rights?*

#WhatWomenWant is space to grow, to be free and to participate in what they choose, not to have social, structural, financial barriers placed ahead of them deliberately, hence need for improved political commitment to health and rights of women and girls.

## WNZ diary

We had a full program at the WNZ at AIDS2018, with 35 programmed sessions including dialogues, workshops, launches and more. Below is a snapshot of some of the sessions and highlights, documented by the WNZ team and partners.

### MONDAY

#### **Building an 'HIV toolbox' for women living with HIV | The Well Project, 9.30-10.45**

Women living with HIV who experience isolation can connect to research, support and information through the Well Project, which provides community, advocacy and information. Webinars are a great way to advocate and get information out. Priority is to meet people where they are – this is sisterhood and advocacy. Key quote: “stigma is an attitude!”

#### **Dialogue with Gunilla Carlsson, UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director | UNAIDS, 11.00-12.30**

Gunilla Carlsson shared her priorities including commitment to keep asking the questions around how to reduce stigma and discrimination, noting that answers look different in different situations. No one is a superwoman, power can be difficult to hold and alone you can only achieve so much. Working in teams we can learn from each other, start from bold ideas, be yourself, and find friends who might not be above or below you but who can support you.

Resty, a young woman leader and #WhatWomenWant champion, asked Gunilla what UNAIDS can do to support mentorships for leaders and workers in organizations like the youth group she founded. Gunilla outlined the need to find new ways of working and for

UNAIDS to understand more how different organizations work in different places. We need to consider if we are investing enough in civil society as we need solid long-term organizations. Another advocate asked how UNAIDS could support women like her to achieve their goals. Gunilla highlighted that UNAIDS need to have a better understanding of addressing gender imbalances with a broader perspective, to support claims for justice of individuals and recognize misuse of power.

#### **We have our rights! Women, violence and diversity | AIDS Legal Network (ALN), Circle of Genders, Sibanye LGBTI Group, Lowveld LGBT Group, 15.30-16.30**

Drawing on ALN's research into violence against women and human rights abuses, this session focused on women, violence and diversity. Inclusivity to recognize multiple identities is important, such as woman living with HIV, mother, LGBT, sex worker. The cross over between communities and movements of different identities can be a challenge. One woman, a lesbian woman living with HIV, who needs HIV treatment, said in the research: “I want to be seen as a person, not as a target group.”

### TUESDAY

#### **We are READY: Young women speak truth to power | International HIV/AIDS Alliance, ZY+, 10.30-11.30**

This discussion was an interactive dialogue among young women and their allies, to explore, “What do we have in our Toolkit?” and “What strengths, skills and opportunities can we name that make us great sexual and reproductive health and rights advocates?” Patricia Humura of Peer to Peer Uganda, a READY affiliate in Uganda, called herself a “fearless feminist” and described how she knows now that she can access what she needs,

and that she is capable. Speakers highlighted how as young women themselves, they understand the realities of young women and girls so can speak to their issues effectively. Young women described how they speak truth to power: “By recognizing that it's okay to be different, to be me – once you know that, you have the power to speak out”; “When you have the knowledge, you have the power to decide; to make the right choices”; “Yes, but while we know and have the power, we need the resources to do what we know we can.” READY has supported young women to be active in stakeholder dialogues, to feel confident and to speak up. A top tip from young women leaders: in whatever space you are in, regardless of the agenda, come with your OWN agenda, be prepared to advance the agendas of young women and adolescent girls.

#### **The role of gender programming in the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) evolution agenda | Women4GlobalFund (W4GF), Lean on Me, Access Chapter 2, 11.30-12.30**

This session was an open dialogue to both educate about what Global Fund Community, Rights and Gender (CRG) department has already done to help CCMs be more gender transformative; and also noting what still need to get done. Key discussion points included the need always to have more one woman on the CCM, as there is too much for one woman to take on. She needs a quorum to make a difference. Similarly, we need mentorship for civil society representatives on CCMs so that they can ramp up quickly and make the most of their participation at that level, even to quickly master the technical language. There was a suggestion the Community Delegation model used at the global level could be introduced at the country level. A need was identified for gender

technical assistance at all stages of the grant cycle, beyond just the proposal stage. There also needs to be better alignment between funding mechanisms and technical assistance and how programs are operating, as the technical assistance template used by the Global Fund does not align with how work on gender actually operates. Women's organizations do not have the capacity to plan, coordinate, generate and access data in ways that are required to access Global Fund funding, so perhaps Global Fund could introduce smaller grants. There was also a suggestion that the CRG could document what has worked elsewhere so that we can see what is working and what isn't to prevent detours and duplication.

**Making PrEP work for women: engaging women in low prevalence settings in new prevention technologies – the womenandprep.org.uk experience | Sophia Forum, 13.30-14.30**

Women PrEP advocates from the UK shared their work to reach women with PrEP information. Reaching women with PrEP information has been slower because the starting point was zero knowledge about PrEP and little knowledge or engagement with HIV. Information resources specifically for women including a leaflet and a targeted website have helped to address this. HIV does not affect only one community, so as work continues to grow it will be important to develop resources and reach out to different communities. There is no such thing as hard to reach, if something isn't working that simply means we need to think about new ways to reach people. There is still learning to be done but need to make sure we continue to push for more space and a voice at the table and inclusiveness for all women.

**WEDNESDAY**

**Sexual and reproductive health of women from key groups in Eastern Europe and Central Asia region / Eurasian Women's Network on AIDS (EWNA), 9.30-11.30**

What are the needs of women? What are the most-needed services for women with HIV that are offered by the WHO Guideline on SRH? How can we achieve access to SRH services in all EECA countries and quality of provision? What barriers do women have? What should be in the minimal package of services? These and other issues were discussed by the participants. Additionally, the results of a project on cervical cancer screening for women living with HIV from Tajikistan were presented – 46% of women had pathologies that contributed to the development of the disease.

**What does the use of dolutegravir mean for women of reproductive age, after the recent WHO warning? | ICW East Africa (ICWEA), 11.30-12.30**

This panel discussion, hosted by ICWEA, considered the impact of the recent WHO warning regarding the safety of dolutegravir (DTG) during pregnancy. A preliminary analysis of an observational study in Botswana on the use of DTG raised concerns regarding the possibility of increased risk of neural tube defects. The WHO published a statement, which has led to some countries proposing to prevent all women of reproductive age from accessing DTG. This has caused significant concern for women living with HIV. Priority messages included the need to involve women living with HIV in the process of developing WHO recommendations and to provide clarity where the alerts are being misunderstood. Not every woman will choose or be able to become pregnant so a blanket policy is inappropriate.

**YWLI Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) – Power Hour, 12.30-13.30**

AGYW from countries including Zimbabwe, Uganda, Kenya and the USA attended this session, where the focus was on women in leadership positions. Discussion covered how to better support young women to take up leadership roles and ensure that leaders are those with passion to champion others. Supportive environments are needed as well as inequalities among women and between women and men. #WhatWomenWant is to be involved in decisions about funding, to have services that better suit our needs, to be educated and empowered to take up leadership positions and mentorship for young women entering leadership roles.

**Integrating prevention and control of female genital schistosomiasis and cervical cancer with the HIV response | UNAIDS, 13.30 -14.30**

This panel discussion focused on integration of responses to female genital schistosomiasis (FGS) and cervical cancer in the HIV response. FGS is a bacterial infection transmitted through contaminated water. Up to 56 million women in Africa have it. FGS can be prevented through vaccination and early diagnosis. Cervical cancer risk can be reduced by vaccination for HPV, which WHO is working hard to promote for women. The panel considered how we can we galvanize the energies and activism from HIV to FGS to have that connection. Solutions include translating political commitments into action, and ensuring that health workers are aware of FGS to ensure integrated services are offered. Better education and simplified terminology is needed. Women and girls should be at the center in terms of improving our activism and creating demand for services.



## THURSDAY

### YWLI Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) – Power Hour, 12.30-13.30

Young women from Kenya, Puerto Rico, Kenya, Canada and Ukraine discussed their #WhatWomenWant advocacy priorities. These included support to prepare for and participate effectively in meetings and to take the learning back to their communities and beyond the meeting. Invitations are not enough, young women should be in the main conference not just the Global Village, not enough to be a side dish, they should be in the main event. Young women need community-driven solutions that are inclusive of all diversities.

### Women’s leadership in the nationalization and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, providing a gender-responsive approach to leave no-one behind / Eurasian Women’s Network on AIDS (EWNA), UN Women Ukraine, 13.30-14.30

Led by EWNA and supported by their partners, the office of UN Women in Ukraine. EWNA has a unique experience of training leaders based on the principle of “peer to peer” to work with the SDGs. The experience of Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan was presented at the WNZ in the processes of nationalization and

implementation of the SDGs, using their tasks to promote the interests of communities. Representatives of African countries took an active part in the discussion. The session was facilitated by Galina Meshcheryakova from the country office of the UN Women in Ukraine, the speakers were Alina Yaroslavskaya, Ukraine and Lyubov Chubukova, Kazakhstan. Takhmina Haydarova, Tajikistan and Elena Bilokon, Kazakhstan also shared their experience.

## FRIDAY

### #WhatWomenWant: effective accountability mechanisms. A workshop to explore strategies to hold decision-makers to account for decisions that affect you / ATHENA Initiative, 9.30-10.45

In this workshop, ATHENA shared the #WhatWomenWant: Accountability in Action Toolkit and participants shared examples of accountability gaps and advocacy to overcome these. Key messages included the importance of accountability at every stage of policy processes, program design and implementation. Accountability should be an ongoing conversation and start from the beginning, not just to consult on a finished product. Women are willing to be part of these processes, want to be engaged meaningfully and are ready to take part. #WhatWomenWant tools can help to support making this happen.

“

For me I think the WNZ is absolutely necessary because as much as people don’t want to admit it, women are impacted by HIV and they’re impacted at disproportionate rates. We have to look at the social determinants of health, as to why HIV is on the rise in the community of women, whether it is cis women or trans women, whether it is women of color, because they are most impacted. So for us to have a space here in this conference where we can share ideas is of grave importance otherwise we would all be suffering in silence and here we have the opportunity to network with other likeminded individuals.”

TIAMI, USA



## Feedback from WNZ presenters and looking ahead to future Women's Networking Zones

The Women's Networking Zone in Amsterdam was a vital, diverse and inclusive space that hosted a broad range of sessions, panels and networking events while also acting as a home for women and girls attending the International AIDS Conference, building networks and facilitating a global community of women united in their advocacy. A space dedicated to and centering women's voices, priorities and agendas will continue to be a vital addition to the International AIDS Conference until the rights, experiences and voices of women and girls take centre stage within the main conference.

We asked presenters and session leads for their feedback on the WNZ at AIDS 2018 to help us learn how to improve in the future. A short survey was shared, and 8 responses received in total from presenters or contributors to nine different sessions in the WNZ program. In addition, one presenter shared general feedback by email, included below. The response rate was about a third of presenters which is in keeping with previous follow-up surveys on the WNZ. In the aftermath of the conference many presenters are busy with other commitments and this affects the response rate given short timelines to gather data.

Presenters who lead sessions in the WNZ are vital partners in the effort to create an engaging, informative and innovative programme that underpins the value of the WNZ. Their contributions were invaluable, and we would like to thank everyone who led or facilitated a session at WNZ 2018.

Responses overall were very positive. Asked to rate their experiences of presenting in the WNZ, on a scale from 1 to 5 representing very poor to very good, presenters all rated the application process, communications with organizers, the WNZ as a venue and logistics and AV as good or very good.

Respondents were asked what went well in their experience of hosting a session in the WNZ, comments included:

- *Generally a good experience! Thank you.*
- *It was nice to be sitting close to the audience and to have a good discussion with the participants.*
- *It was very well attended and we were pleased to have attendees not from the UK and be able to hear their experiences/challenges around PrEP in their respective countries*
- *The support from the staff and the fact that they had small supplies and access to a computer if need be.*
- *It was well organized; the sessions started on time; the equipment worked and it was less noisy than in previous conferences.*
- *[Sent by email] For me, it was incredibly important as always to have the opportunity of the WNZ space to bring issues of global concern to women living with HIV to the conference that had not been accepted in the main conference. E.g. the WHO SRHR Guideline – we had our submission to the main conference rejected but were kindly given a slot in the WNZ. The ALIVHE Framework – which highlights the lack of global and national indicators relevant to women's QoL experiences around HIV and VAW – again*



*this was rejected by the main conference but we had the opportunity to have it in the WNZ. Our session included Tim Martineau, the new Deputy ED of UNAIDS as one of our speakers, reflecting UNAIDS commitment to this issue. A third session, also rejected by the main conference, was on our CUSP work which is concerned about the ethics of scale up of gendered social norms change programs and how our evidence-based programs are being used by donors and large grant recipients. For example, in Uganda, DREAMS fund holders using Stepping Stones are starting by testing girls to see if they have HIV as an entry point to the program. This is a huge rights violation, since it means that everyone then realizes they have HIV if they don't take part in the program – and could lead to violence against them – and is totally unconnected to the original program. Another session we had was a discussion on lack of representation of women living with HIV in the main conference either in person or in sessions (this did get accepted as a poster in the main conference – but with no space for discussion). Once again the WNZ agenda showed that this is where the real conference takes place around women's rights and it goes on being crucial.*

Asked if any unexpected problems had arisen with their sessions, 6 said no, while one said noise from the adjacent networking zone had been difficult at times, and another that their session coincided with the lighting of the Positive Flame, which affected the number of participants who attended the beginning of their session.

All respondents were happy with the number of participants in their session, two noted they did not have large numbers but did have good engagement. In addition, all said they were happy with the variety of people who attended their session.

We asked what could have been done differently to improve the experience of presenting in the WNZ. Four felt it had been good and could not identify improvements. One suggested beginning the organization process earlier, another had challenges due to their session being in Russian, limiting participants.

Respondents were asked to look ahead to AIDS 2020 and share what they hoped to see from the Women's Networking Zone there:

- *I hope you will be there and continue to be a significant part of the global village.*
- *Better and more cooperation and networking amongst all involved.*
- *More of the same. I know there is some overlap between the WNZ and other spaces (SRHR zone, Human Rights zone, etc.), but I think the WNZ is a really important space and does a great job. I found the WNZ sessions I went to very useful and informative, and it was great to have such a warm and welcoming space focusing specifically on women.*
- *More inclusion of trans women in the space and a space that can include sex workers PWID and those formerly incarcerated*
- *Slightly larger screen size :) And all of us!*
- *I hope not to see them in San Francisco if it happens there [due to concerns over holding the conference in the US under President Trump's administration].*
- *Really important that there continues to be a space for women in their diversity to meet and share.*

Looking ahead, the ongoing value of the WNZ is underscored by all respondents. Ensuring the space and programme is inclusive of women in all our diversity is also an important priority.



A top tip from young women leaders:  
Whatever space you are in, regardless of the agenda, come with your OWN agenda, and be prepared to advance the agendas of adolescent girls and young women.



**Amsterdam 1992-2018**  
**Still advancing**  
**women's rights**