

THE ICWEA BULLETIN

July 2015



The International Community of Women Living with HIV&AIDS Eastern Africa (ICWEA)

ICWEA AT 10 years: The top 10 achievements

On July 8, ICWEA officially commemorated our 10th anniversary with representatives from all the five member countries. As part of the celebrations, we came up with 10 outstanding achievements by the organisation in the last 10 years. These are;



1 The International Community of Women Living with HIV&AIDS Eastern Africa (ICWEA) membership: The organisation now boasts of an increased and empowered membership. ICWEA has over 7,305 members including young women living with HIV spread across different districts in the five East African countries; Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania.

The membership has been empowered with capacity and skills in Advocacy, Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights, Gender & Human Rights, Programming, Policy Analysis, Monitoring & Evaluation and Community Mobilisation. The members are able to influence public opinion, policies, programming, funding and service delivery at the local, national and international levels.

As women living with HIV, we are able to speak out on issues that affect our lives and when our human and health rights are violated.

2 Institutional growth and development: The organisation has grown into a regional advocacy network with systems and structures in place, now operating in five East African countries. Three country chapters are fully registered and two others on track and with a clear strategy of reaching all other countries in Eastern Africa. ICWEA now boasts of 10 staff members and one Country Coordinator for ICW Kenya Chapter. ICWEA with support from Norad has established its own home/secretariat.

The ICWEA secretariat office building in Wakiso District, Kampala, Uganda.



3. **Key role in the fight against TB/HIV:** There has been scaling up of advocacy for the implementation and integration of TB/HIV services in Zambia, Kenya and Uganda. ICWEA in partnership with Treatment Action Group (TAG) built capacity and supported 63 TB/HIV community advocates and leaders of networks of people leaving with HIV from Sub Saharan Africa who are core advocate groups of TB/HIV. These identified critical TB/HIV issues of focus at their national levels. They have also been successful in carrying out TB/HIV advocacy in their respective countries. Some of these have been selected as TB/HIV community representatives at the global, regional and national decision making bodies like Global Fund, Stop TB partnership, UNITAID and country coordinating mechanisms. ICWEA has replicated the similar strategy in the Eastern Africa region with support from the Stop TB chal-

lenge facility.

The TB/HIV project has also been implemented in Mubende and Mitiyana districts in Uganda. In addition to this, 20 empowered advocates who are women living with HIV/TB carried out monitoring exercise to access the availability and accessibility of TB and TB/HIV services in two districts. The identified challenges were shared with policy makers, health care providers and local government officials during the policy dialogues at the district and national levels respectively.

Because of their work, the policy makers made a commitment to address the challenges and have registered positive changes such as the improvement in the collaboration between the TB and HIV programmes at district levels. In our next five years strategy, this programme will be further replicated in all Eastern Africa countries.



4. **Shaping the discussion on HIV&AIDS, Sexual Reproductive Health & rights, Gender and Human Rights through research and our lived experiences:** The International Community of Women Living with HIV&AIDS Eastern Africa (ICWEA) has carried out research on various issues thereby contributing to the body of evidence and influencing policies, programming, decision making and shaping the funding agenda.



5. **Development of a successful community systems strengthening model:** The Core Group of Advocates model The International Community of women living with HIV has been engaged in Advocacy related capacity building and community engagement work. In 2010, we developed a community systems strengthening model. The model recognizes the importance of building a community support and a knowledge base through intensive community mobilisation, advocacy training, and on-going support.

The Model involves creating a critical mass of women advocates at the community, national and regional levels that have better understanding of subject, policy structures that surround the issues so that they are able to address women living with HIV issues including Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights, Human Rights & Gender and health gaps from an informed perspective and this involves engaging with policy-processes at national, regional and international levels to address/bridge policy, programmatic and funding gaps on women living with HIV issues.

The model seeks to strengthen the advocates' capacity to engage in

broader advocacy by influencing decision makers at all levels.

This model has successfully been used while implementing the Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights, Maternal Health, and the TB/HIV programmes. The model involves the following five key areas:

- Advocacy workshops/ Capacity building and issue identification.
- On-going support to the trained advocates - one to one and as a group
- Monitoring the implementation of the programmes and policies at the community level – Issue identification
- Policy advocacy and implementation, at different levels – dialogue meetings
- Enhancing representation of women at different levels, national, regional and international level.

6. **Improving livelihood, addressing the priorities of women living with HIV in Africa:** This has been done through the Women and Families programme by ICWEA in partnership with ITPC. ICWEA managed and coordinated the Collaborative Fund for Women and Families in Africa, a programme that was managed by Women living with HIV where over USD 924,991 was granted to 63 Women organisations from 25 Sub Saharan African Countries.

It was the first of its kind connecting positive women's groups at the grassroots and advocacy all over the continent around our health and rights priorities. The HIV Collaborative Fund for Women & Families in Africa was dedicated to HIV positive women's groups & networks, to ensure women accessed information about their health and rights and were protected from stigma and discrimination.

The process was empowering as Women themselves designed the grants, set out criteria to fit women's priorities and focused on areas impacting on the right to access health services: treatment literacy, sexual & reproductive rights, gender equity and livelihood.



7 Sustained and result-oriented advocacy work at national, regional and international levels:

ICWEA's advocacy work dates back to 2008 when as a member of the Global Task Force on HIV related travel restrictions led to countries like USA, China and Namibia lifting the travel ban restrictions for people living with HIV. In 2010, ICW Eastern Africa exposed for the first time cases of coerced/forced sterilisation in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda during a sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) programme. The issue was taken over by OSIEA in Kenya and later on KELIN on behalf of Women living with HIV that were coerced into sterilisation. Cases have been taken to court and through our country chapter, ICW Kenya, we continue to work with KELIN and we are optimistic that justice will be done and through community mobilisation and advocacy, we are optimistic that this practice will come to an end. ICWEA's sustained advocacy work can also be seen from the engagement and advocacy around the Hormonal Contraceptives use and HIV risk, engagement with the funding mechanisms like PEPFAR, Global Fund and the now Uganda HIV Prevention and AIDS Control ACT 2014. In 2011, the network raised the issues raised by the HIV Prevention & AIDS Control Bill in international media for the first time from the perspective of women living with HIV focusing on sexual and reproductive health and rights. (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/sarah-boseley-global-health/2011/may/13/hiv-infection-aids>).

8 Enhancing representation of women living with HIV at all levels:

The International Community of women living with HIV&AIDS Eastern Africa has over the past 10 years enabled women living with HIV including young women to have their voice at key decision making tables and processes where key decisions that affect the lives of women living with HIV are being made. Through the trained core groups of advocates' structure, we ensure that women living with HIV are part of the planning processes that happen at national, regional and international levels.

9 Strengthened collaboration and partnerships:

Over the last 10 years, ICWEA has worked with different partners and has been part of several coalitions. The power of working together in unity and as one entity is the reason we have registered several achievements. The financial support that we continue to receive from various development partners is an indication that ICWEA has gained their trust and support over time.



10 A lift to the visibility of the Network and of women living with HIV:

The International Community of women living with HIV&AIDS Eastern Africa has been able to hold the ICW Network together. In the last 10 years, ICWEA boasts of mentoring young women living with HIV and regional networks like ICW Southern Africa and West Africa. ICWEA played an important role when ICW Global transitioned to Nairobi Kenya.



Pictorial > ICWEA celebrates 10 years of existence



Above: Adrienne Munene, the Chairperson, ICWEA board giving a speech at the ceremony. Below (L-R): The Guest of honour, the Minister of Health, Hon. Dr. Elioda Tumwesigye chats with the ICWEA Executive Director Lillian Mworeko and a Project Officer, Hajjarah Nagadya.



Above: Members of the International Community of Women Living with HIV Eastern Africa (ICWEA) during the march. This was one of the activities of the 10th anniversary celebrations. Below: ICWEA members during the dialogue about what needs to be done to keep HIV&AIDs on the agenda after 2015.



Top to bottom are young women listening to speakers and the ICWEA Programmes Manager, Dorothy Namutamba moderating the dialogue.



...ICWEA @ 10 Pictorial continued



Above: Invited guests from Uganda and Burundi.

Below: Mary Oduka of Irish Aid (L), Paul Isiko of Uganda Stop TB (R) Partnership and Josephine (C) celebrating 10 years of ICWEA at the dinner.



Above (L-R) are some of the ICWEA staff members Hajjarah Nagadya, Elly Mayina, Lillian Mworeko and Rachel Nandelenga. Below is a gift to ICWEA members.



Below (L-R): Asia Russel of Health Gap, Hajjati Mariam of Arch Apartments, Allen Kuteesa of Health Rights Action Group and Proscovia Ayoo an ICWEA board member at the dinner to mark 10 years of ICWEA.





ICWEA gets award for most participatory research

The LINKUP project team has recognised the International Community of Women Living with HIV (ICWEA) with an award for engaging young women living with HIV as research assistants in the study on violations of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) of women living with HIV in Uganda.

The award for Most Participatory Research was handed to the ICWEA team on July 1, 2015 at the LINKUP Africa Regional Meeting that took place from June 28 to July 2, 2015 at Laico Lake Victoria Hotel in Entebbe.

About the research

A total of 30 young women living with HIV coming from the 9 districts where the research was to be conducted were trained as the Research Assistants and then engaged in data collection which involved mobilising the research participants, screening over 700 women living with HIV in their reproductive age carrying out, in-depth interviews, FGDS and transcribing data for the report writing process.

Rachel Nandelenga, the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Officer and Brenda Facy Azizuyo, a young woman, who shared her experience as young woman who participated in the research processes represented ICWEA at the ceremony.

About LINKUP

LINKUP is a project aiming at improving the SRHR of more than one million young people in Bangla-



desh, Burundi, Ethiopia, Myanmar and Uganda by addressing the SRH needs of young people at risk of or living with HIV (aged 10-24) and to uphold their sexual and reproductive rights.

Funded by the government of the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BUZA) through its Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Fund, the programme runs from January 2013 to July 2016 and draws on the strengths of a consortium of organizations including International HIV/AIDS Alliance,

Gyca, Marie Stopes STOP AIDS NOW (SAN), International, Population Council.

Focus and findings

ICWEA with support from SAN carried out the research on the violations of SRHR of women living with HIV in HIV and SRHR clinical settings. The study sought to examine the existence of violations of rights of women of reproductive age living with HIV as they seek sexual and reproductive health services in clinical settings in Uganda; with focus on forced sterilisation, among other SRHR violations.

Preliminary findings confirm that women living with HIV experience a range of violations including misinformation, mistreatment/abuse during the process of seeking reproductive health services especially maternal health services from health facilities, to coerced or forced sterilisation.

The project also sought to build capacity of young women living with HIV to examine their own experiences from gender-human rights lenses to engage in advocacy for their sexual and reproductive health rights.

Up Coming

- > Uganda: Teso region elimination of Mother to Child Transmission (eMTCT) launch, July 30.
- > Monitoring EMTCT in Kenya and Tanzania.
- > The 18th International Conference on AIDS and STIs (ICASA) will be held in Zimbabwe, November 29 to December 4 2015.



**APPLY
NOW!**

An opportunity to become an AVAC fellow

There is still time to apply for 2016 Advocacy Fellows by AVAC (Global Advocacy for HIV prevention). The goal of AVAC's Advocacy Fellows program is to expand the capacity of advocates and organizations to monitor, support and help shape biomedical HIV prevention research and implementation of proven interventions worldwide. The submission deadline for Advocacy Fellows applications is Monday, 10 August 2015. Download application materials at www.avac.org/fellows-application-materials.

The ICWEA Bulletin is published by the Communications office at the regional secretariat, Plot 1106 Ssenge Road - Wakiso District, Kampala, Uganda. Articles published here can be reproduced freely provided ICWEA is acknowledged. More details can be obtained from the Communications Officer, Brenda Banura; Tel: +256 414 531 913, Email: bbanura@icwea.org.