

# THE ICWEA BULLETIN

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

## Take action: End forced and coerced sterilization of women living with HIV

**W**hile women living with HIV like any other women who are not HIV-positive share similar sexual and reproductive health rights, a study – “Violations of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Women living with HIV in Clinical and Community setting in Uganda” found that women living with HIV experience a wide range of violations in clinical settings, their homes as well as in their communities.

During a community dialogue, a medic in disbelief said it was not possible that a doctor sterilized a woman living with HIV without consent because it is unethical.

But a testimony by a women liv-

ing with HIV who had been forcefully sterilized quickly silenced her and removed thoughts that the injustice is a myth.

She said, “My husband passed away just before I gave birth to our first child. As I went to the labour ward, I knew that I would go back again after mourning my husband and getting involved with another man. Unknown to me then, that was the last time I would go to the labour ward as a patient. After giving birth by caesarian, the doctor took it upon himself to sterilize me. I discovered this a while later when I went for a scan in an attempt to find out why I was not getting pregnant. Years later, it still hurts like I have just found out. I do not know what I would

do to the doctor who did this to me if I laid my eyes and hands on him,” she narrated.

Coerced and forced is an injustice that should end. This is why ICWEA is collecting signatures to petition the government of Uganda to guarantee the right of women living with HIV to SRHR information services and to end forced and coerced sterilization of women living with HIV. Add your voice to this by signing the petition.

**Petition:** <https://www.change.org/p/government-of-uganda-end-forced-and-coerced-sterilization-of-women-living-with-hiv>

### About the study

The study was conducted in 2014, in nine districts of Uganda. The commonest violation was found to be coerced and/or forced sterilization which happened at an average age of 29. ICWEA recommends sensitizing about women’s SRHR rights integrating information into current HIV/AIDS programmes and services. Counselling services at the community level are necessary to offer psychosocial support to women experiencing SRHR violations. The tubal ligation protocols need to be developed and should be communicated during antenatal clinic visits. Health workers need to be trained in offering professional care without violating women’s rights, ensuring that informed consent processes are of high quality. HIV and SRH policies need to be reviewed, taking into account SRHR violations.

**Full report:** <http://www.icwea.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2015/11/ICWEA-Sexual-Reproductive-Health-Rights-Report-Uganda.pdf>

### ICW-Kenya enjoining the case of sterilization of women living with HIV

On April 13, 2016, court held yet another hearing regarding the forced sterilization case in regard to ICW Kenya being enjoined as an interested party in the petition.

ICWK though our lawyer was served with an objection from the first respondent Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF). These objected ICWK being

enjoined on the grounds of duplicity with ICW Global. A ruling will be heard on June 10, 2016.

The sterilization of HIV-positive Kenyan women without their consent first sparked outrage in 2012, when a report titled “Robbed of Choice” described the experiences of 40 women living with HIV who had been forcibly

or coercively sterilized. Five of those women are now suing the Kenyan government for violations of their health and human rights.

Forced sterilization of women living with HIV is a global injustice. ICWEA is carrying out a campaign calling for an end to this vice.

## Vaginal ring: New HIV prevention tool tailored for women and girls



In February 2016, researchers released results of two major studies (ASPIRE and the Ring study) which found the dapivirine vaginal ring safe and effective in HIV prevention in women especially among the older woman (more than 30 years).

The ring contains dapivirine, a drug used in HIV prevention. It is inserted by the woman and is left in place for one month during which time, it keeps on releasing the ARV medication (dapivirine) slowly to prevent HIV infection among HIV negative women.

This news is a ray of hope in the battle to reduce new HIV infections which are highest among women and girls.

The ring which is yet to be approved for use will join the limited basket of HIV prevention tools that are tailored for females. The results doubtlessly evoke a discussion about HIV prevention methods and tools for women and girls.

Due to the numerous limitations that women face in society, they need female controlled HIV prevention methods that will empower them without having to bargain with men for safe sex. It is the responsibility of all advocates to make this happen, ICWEA will remain at the centre of advocating for tools and methods that will ensure HIV prevention among women and girls.

## Uganda dents HIV&AIDS response by failing to spend Global Fund grants

Following a February 2016 audit of Global Fund grants in Uganda, that found millions in unspent funds; massive public sector stock outs of life-saving HIV, The International Community of Women Living with HIV Eastern African together with other Civil Society Organisations held a press conference to call for immediate bold corrective action in the management and control of Global Fund grants by the Ugandan government.

The media coverage forced the MOH officials who had earlier deliberately refused to comment about the audit report to come out and explain the audit findings.

But even then, civil society is not convinced that the corrective actions being proposed are substantial enough to trigger the changes that are urgently required.

It is based on this that a number of recommendations were made; including dissolving the Global Fund Focal Coordination Office in the Ministry of Health, and immediately handing over authority to The AIDS Support Organization (TASO) for completion.

There is also a recommendation that Ministry of Health stops implementing Global Fund grants in the public sector and an alternative implementer with a proven track record of successful grant implementation and performance should be found.

ICWEA will continue working to advocate for improvement in the implementation of the Global Fund in the region.

## Kenya court rules that TB is not a crime

The Kenya High Court ruled that imprisoning Tuberculosis (TB) patients who default on their treatment is unconstitutional.

While noting that there is a need to isolate TB patients to ensure they take their medicine and stop the spread of the infectious disease, Justice Mumbi Ngugi added that jailing them is a violation of their rights and worsens the situation.

Justice Ngugi was ruling in a case filed by Allan Maleche (Advocate for the Petitioners) on behalf of Daniel Ng'etich, Patrick Kipng'etich Kirui and Kenya Legal and Ethical Issues Network on HIV & AIDS (KELIN). Ng'etich and Kirui who were jailed on August 12, 2010, for defaulting on their treatment. The two were confined at the Kapsabet Prison for eight months in 2010 but they only served two months after their plight was highlighted by the media and civil society.

The judge said: "The manner in which TB patients should be isolated and confined should be in a humane way and as per provided for in the law."

TB kills more women each year than any other infection especially because there are more women living with HIV. Three East African countries (Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya) remain among the 22 TB high burden countries in the world, this judgment will go a long way in the fight to end TB.

ICWEA applauds KELIN for standing strong for the protection of the rights of people with TB. We also applaud ICWEA members in Kenya who have been part of this process. Protecting human rights of patients is core to ICWEA's business and we will continue supporting KELIN and all partners who choose to take the journey of human rights protection and ensuring social justice for all.

# ICWEA and the AIDS 2016 Conference

The International AIDS Conference commonly referred to as AIDS 2016 is slated to take place from July 18 to July 22 in Durban, South Africa. The conference has an exciting line up of presenters that you do not want to miss. There will also be over 500 conference activities and sessions driven by top science and research discoveries and a lot more. Registration to attend the conference is still ongoing.

As an international civil society partner, ICWEA has been part of organizing committees and planning for the programmes and activities set to take place during the AIDS 2016 conference.

In a bid to create awareness about the forth coming International AIDS Conference dubbed AIDS 2016, ICWEA took advantage of the massive turn up of HIV advocates, scientists and various personalities at The International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA) to promote the upcoming conference during a march.

ICWEA also developed a six paged power point presentation about AIDS 2016 that was presented at all ICWEA meetings with CSOs, women living with HIV and other stakeholders.

We have also has provided technical support to different people that have been interested in the AIDS 2016

conference. Through the website and social media platforms especially Facebook and Twitter, ICWEA has publicized the conference.

We also sent out a call for submissions from, young women living with HIV about their experiences living with HIV to involve them in shaping and contributing to the way forward towards managing and preventing the AIDS epidemic. 20 submissions were sent in by young women from Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, and Zimbabwe.

Results of the winner who will be sponsored to attend the AIDS 2016 conference will be announced soon.

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## ICW -Kenya part of AIDS Strategic Framework review

ICW Kenya represented by three members has been involved in the final review of the Kenya AIDS Strategic Framework.

It was recognized as a team of experts to help in the development of county specific HIV strategic plans that will ensure issues relating to PLHIV especially women living with HIV are prioritized.

Three members of ICWK were interviewed and selected to support this process. Some of the key issues that were highlighted and adopted for action and implementation are;

- Gender based violence as a course and a consequence of HIV

- Stigma and discrimination,

- Violation of human rights of women living with HIV especially at health facilities as a major impediment especially for women living with HIV in accessing services

ICWK has also been appointed to be part of the national technical working group of Meaningful Involvement of persons living with HIV (MIPA) for the period of the current Kenya AIDS strategic plan KASF, which ends in 2019.

# Up Coming

- > AIDS 2016 Conference July 18 - 22, Durban, South Africa
- > High Level meeting on ending AIDS June 8 – 10, New York
- > 8th International Workshop on HIV Pediatrics, July 15 – 16, Durban, South Africa

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