

Building women's global meaningful participation in the High Level Meeting on AIDS



The ATHENA Network and the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS initiated a global virtual consultation in nine languages, engaging approximately 800 women from over 95 countries, in order to provide a platform for women and girls - especially those of us living with and affected by HIV - to voice our priorities and vision for the future of the HIV response. The consultation aimed to take stock of women's experiences of the measures in place to curb HIV to date; and to ensure

women- and girls-centered input into the High Level Meeting on AIDS in June 2011.

In looking to the future, we recognize the centrality of women's rights and gender equality to the success of the HIV response and reaffirm our shared commitment to women, girls, and gender equality in the context of HIV and AIDS. In these key regional messages, women and girls voice our vision for positive change. Our first message is to ensure that all women

and girls are respected, engaged, and recognized in all the rich diversity of our multiple - often overlapping - identities: as women and girls living with and affected by HIV; young women; sex workers; lesbian, bisexual, or transgender women; migrant, refugee, or internally displaced women; women with experience of prison, drug use, caregiving, widowhood, and disabilities; and indigenous, rural, and urban women.



HIV PRIORITIES FOR POSITIVE CHANGE

as identified by women from across the Middle East and North Africa toward achieving Universal Access

- **Ensure access to inclusive, holistic, and integrated HIV services, including TB and hepatitis, for women and girls in all our diversity**

"Harm reduction programmes are missing despite the fact that people who use drugs are among the most affected by HIV."

- **Promote safety for all women and girls through the HIV response, by eliminating gender-based violence, discrimination, and harmful cultural practices**

"Women can access free condoms in care centres and testing sites, but cannot request, let alone insist, on condom use or other form of protection. If they refuse to have sex or demand that a condom be used, they may risk suffering violence because they are suspected of being unfaithful."

- **Champion gender equality to accelerate women's empowerment, and the engagement of men and boys in order to defend and protect the rights of women**

"Although women know about their rights, they and their children usually depend financially on their in-laws; widows whose partners have died from HIV or

AIDS related illness are afraid to confide in their in-laws for fear of stigma and discrimination."



“Promote the greater participation of all key affected women and girls in decision-making that affects their lives.”

Concluding Comments

The virtual consultation was developed with the ethos and intent of democratizing international processes – and to provide a vehicle whereby women and girls from all walks of life and in all regions of the world can have their say on the achievements, challenges, and opportunities for change as the global community looks to the 2011 High Level Meeting on AIDS.

What we have learned through the development of the consultation and through our analysis of what women are saying is

simply that women seek and are thirsty to be engaged and viewed as equal, active stakeholders and as agents of change rather than as subordinate, passive recipients. The responses we have received demonstrate that women want to enjoy opportunity, independence, sexual and physical autonomy – and as such, women seek an HIV response that is holistic, shared sector-wide, gendered, comprehensive, equitable, and deeply rooted in human rights. Women all over the globe

are taking initiative and are on the front-lines of the response, implementing programs with their own capacity, and bringing about change in their communities.

The most affected women and girls must be most central to the response, and as history has shown us repeatedly where true social transformation has taken place, if these same women’s visions and aspirations were adequately supported, then the aspirations of us all would fall into place.

Acknowledgements

The ATHENA Network and the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS acknowledge and appreciate our outstanding team whose collaboration, investment, and shared expertise has made a virtual consultation for women and girls, and this call to action, toward the 2011 High Level Meeting on AIDS possible.

Lead authors and coordinating team

Luisa Orza (ATHENA)
Tyler Crone (ATHENA)
Claudia Ahumada (GCWA)
Alice Welbourn
(Salamander Trust)

GCWA team

Jantine Jacobi (UNAIDS)
Nazneen Damji (UN Women)
Kreena Govender (UNAIDS)
Matthew Cogan (UNAIDS)

Regional focal points and technical experts

East and Southern Africa
Lydia Mungherera
Esther Mwaura-Muiru
Leah Okeyo
Johanna Kehler
Mmapaseka Steve Letsike

West and Central Africa
Assumpta Reginald

Middle East and North Africa
Valli Yanni

Asia and the Pacific
Ishita Chaudhry
Rathi Ramanathan

Caribbean
Olive Edwards

Latin America
Eugenia Lopez Uribe
Violeta Ross
Tamil Kendall

Eastern Europe and Central Asia
Anna Zakowicz

North America and Western Europe
Ebony Johnson
Silvia Petretti

Key collaborators
Lilian Abracinskas
Judith Bisumbu
Juliana Davids

Shannon Hayes
Zhenya Maron
Inviolata Mbwavi
Svetlana Moroz
Alessandra Nilo
Isabel Nuñez
Hendrica Okondo
Erin O’Mara
MariJo Vazquez
Anandi Yuvraj

Graphic design
Ann Sappenfield

Collaborating Partners



Additional Supporting Partners

Asia Pacific Network of Women with HIV, (WAPN+), Thailand
EATG, Europe
Echos séropos, Belgium
ICW North America, USA
International Women’s Health Coalition, Global
Mama’s Club, Uganda
Seres, Portugal
UK Consortium on AIDS and International
Development, UK

This regional call to action is co-sponsored by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

For more information, please visit www.womenandaids.net and www.athenetwork.org or contact us by email at info@womenandaids.net and admin@athenetwork.org.