



GCWA at the 6th IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Care

I. Overview

The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS (GCWA) engaged at the 6th IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Care, which took place in Rome from 17-20 July 2011. The conference was organized by the International AIDS Society; more information can be found at <http://www.ias2011.org/>

Working in partnership with the ATHENA Network, WECARE+ and the Salamander Trust, the GCWA sought to ensure the meaningful participation of women, in particular young women living with HIV and in all their diversities, throughout the conference. All activities were developed and taken forward in partnership with the above mentioned organizations, and the GCWA would like to express its sincere appreciation in this regard.

A snapshot of the main activities conducted are described below, but be sure to visit our website www.womenandaids.net for more information on the events, articles from participants, and also visit the Rome tab of the www.wecareplus.net, where the newsletter *Mujeres Adelante*, can be found.

II. Young women's meaningful participation

The GCWA is committed to working to ensure the meaningful participation of women in the HIV response, including through supporting and building young women's leadership at different levels. As an opportunity to build the capacity of young women, particularly young women living with HIV, the GCWA supported 23 young women from diverse backgrounds and regions to participate in the IAS conference. This support

resulted in an unprecedented engagement of women, and particularly young women, in the conference. In bringing this together, the GCWA contributed to shifting the terms of the debate at the IAS conference, ensuring that women's rights were voiced throughout.

With the mentorship and coordination provided by the ATHENA Network, WECARE+ and the Salamander Trust, these young women were empowered to learn more about issues related to sexual and reproductive health and rights, HIV and gender, as well as to speak up for their rights and actively engage in diverse sessions.



Young women mobilize at IAS 2011

Stay tuned for stories from the young women about what this experience meant for them – coming soon at www.womenandaids.net

III. Satellite session "Prevention technologies: Gender and GIPA - Complement or Collision?"

Co-convened by GCWA, ATHENA Network, WECARE+ and Salamander Trust, this satellite session, opened by Jantine Jacobi, Director of the GCWA, discussed putting women, particularly women living with HIV, on the HIV prevention agenda with a focus on the gender

dimensions of new technologies and the engagement of women living with HIV.



GCWA Director, Jantine Jacobi, opened the session

A cross disciplinary dialogue, opening speakers included UNAIDS Deputy Director, Paul De Lay and Zena Stein, who spoke, respectively, about how to ensure synergy between science and technological innovation and social and political change for women and girls in the context of HIV, and how the landscape of HIV prevention for women has evolved in the 30 years of the epidemic.

Alice Welbourn moderated the next part of the session, introducing panellists Quarraisha Abdool Karim, Ebony Johnson, Steve Letsike, Emily Bass, and Maryliza Amony. The panel discussed several issues including how microbicides sit within the sexual and reproductive health and rights movement in the context of HIV; increasing demand for and availability of the female condom; the place of medical male circumcision in a gendered response; and how the two recent trial results, regarding reduction of HIV transmission within sero-discordant couples through ARV therapy, and the use of ARVs for pre-exposure prevention, change the prevention landscape for women living with HIV.

The rich discussion revealed that the HIV response is truly at a historic point, with unprecedented opportunities in terms of prevention technologies and treatment. For these to be successful, however, it is paramount that women and particularly women living with HIV be meaningfully engaged at every level. The meeting concluded with a bold and clear call for

increased human rights and sexual and reproductive rights for all women, including women living with HIV. It was asserted that, these rights are paramount to women accessing new prevention technologies, reducing HIV risk and having ownership of their health decisions and outcomes.

To see the video of the full session, visit http://www.wecareplus.net/index.php/page/Rome_2011/en (coming soon!).

IV. Town Hall meeting and reception

The Town Hall session, which was co-convened by GCWA, the ATHENA Network, NPS, WECARE+ and the Salamander Trust, took place outside of the official conference venue to enable and facilitate the participation of people from the local community.

The meeting launched the new UNAIDS and ATHENA Network report "Community Innovation. Achieving Sexual and Reproductive Rights of Women and Girls through the HIV response", available at <http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2011/july/20110719womenias/>



Panelists at the town hall meeting and reception

The report recognizes that women face unique challenges to access and fulfil their sexual and reproductive health rights, and because of this we have less access to HIV prevention, care and support services. But, most importantly, it underscores that we can overcome these challenges. By documenting case studies of community innovation to achieve sexual and reproductive health and rights through the HIV

response, and vice-versa, it is clear that the way forward must include the empowerment of all women, improvements in maternal and child health, and attention to sexual health and sexual diversity.

Through the discussion, participants highlighted that advancing the health and rights of women in all their diversity, including women living with HIV, is fundamental to the success of the HIV response, just as the HIV response is a critical avenue for achieving sexual and reproductive health and rights for women.

This Town Hall session was recorded and will soon also be available at http://www.womeneurope.net/index.php/page/Rome_2011/en

V. Women's Networking Zone

The Women's Networking Zone (WNZ), conceived and coordinated by the ATHENA Network in liaison with others, is built on the principle of local participation and leadership. As a partner of the WNZ, the GCWA supported the organization of a

booth throughout the conference, to provide a space for networking among networks of women living with HIV and women's groups. In addition, the booth enabled the building and strengthening of partnerships among conference participants at large, as well as the young women being engaged in particular.

To enable capacity and leadership development of (young) women living with HIV and other young women also, the WNZ hosted six critical dialogues between women's groups and experts. The topics of the critical dialogues included the following: vertical transmission as a part of an effective SRHR response; treatment access for all women; treatment as prevention; involvement of women in the research agenda; doctors dealing with violence against women; and doctors and harmful legal practices. Videos of the sessions will soon be available at

http://www.wecareplus.net/index.php/page/Rome_2011/en