

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 **West and Central Africa** toward achieving Universal Access

- Ensure access to inclusive and holistic HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support services for women and girls in all our diversity

"Rural women lack access to information and are therefore vulnerable to HIV transmission; they also lack access to services."

- Promote dignity and rights for all women and girls, in particular those of us living with HIV, by eliminating stigma and discrimination

"Women in prison continue to be discriminated against in regards to all HIV related services."

- Accelerate women's empowerment to advance our economic autonomy, political representation, and sexual and reproductive rights

"It is difficult to talk about gender equality. According to religion, women can not be the equal of man."

- Promote safety for all women and girls through the HIV response by eliminating sexual and gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices

"A woman raped by her husband can only access health care services if she can afford it but not legal services as she is looked upon as the husband's property in this part of the world."



“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.

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International Women’s Health Coalition, Global
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Seres, Portugal
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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.

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