

Transformative Leadership for Gender Equality in HIV Response



L-R: Caroline Nyamayemombe (UN Women), Revai Makanje-Aalbaek (UN UN Women) Queen Nana (Ghana), Chief Chiukumbu (Malawi) and Josephine Odera (UN Women)

Three key messages are coming from the 18th session of the International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA). They are:

- We have made progress against AIDS
- We can end AIDS by 2030
- Africa must renew its commitment

Gender inequality is one of the factors that need to be addressed as the world works towards ending AIDS by 2030. Women and girls are among the most vulnerable both in new infections and also in access to treatment due to many factors and ending AIDS would not be complete without empowering women and girls.

With the global shift from a standalone goal on AIDS and reduced resources, transformational leaders to sustain the efforts of addressing women’s empowerment in the AIDS response is critical.

In recognition of this, UN Women, together with UNAIDS held a session on the first day of the 18th session of the International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA), on transformative leadership: the role of African women in sustaining the AIDS response. The session brought together powerful women leaders including South African First Lady Thobeka Madiba Zuma, members of the High Level Task Force for Women, Girls, Gender Equality and AIDS, African Cultural Queens and Chiefs, Ministers and young people.



South African First Lady Thobeka Madiba Zuma

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*Ms Josephine Odera,
UN Women Advisor, Governance and Leadership*



L-R: Zimbabwe Minister for Health and Child Care, David Parirenyatwa and Chief Chikumbu from Malawi



Owoseeni Roseline, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Activist from Nigeria

UN Women’s Leadership and Governance Advisor Ms Josephine Odera gave the key note address and co-moderated the session with Prof Sheila Tlou, UNAIDS Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa.

“A Leader must have a vision that she shares with other women and together develop the vision into action. She must also be available to mentor other women and girls so that they too can be empowered,” she said.

South African First Lady Thobeka Madiba Zuma, spoke of the key role that African First Ladies are playing in the HIV response especially of mother to child transmission through the Organization of African First Ladies on HIV/AIDS (OAFLA). “We have a unique position to influence, right next to the seat of power and we are taking advantage of this,” she said.

The cultural leaders noted that they had an important role to play in empowering women. “Cultural leaders need to be at the forefront of sending HIV messages as well as redefining culture and traditions to ensure that those that are harmful such as early marriages and female genital mutilation are eradicated,” said Queen Nana Adwoa Awindor of Ghana, who is the chair of the African Queens and Women Cultural Leaders Network.

Chief Chikumbu of Malawi informed participants that through the intervention of the cultural leaders in Malawi, a law against early marriages has been passed in the country.

To end AIDS by 2030, there is a need for innovations on how to empower women and girls on their rights. This was the message from the young people. “Young people speak openly about issues. Your purpose in life comes from realizing what really upsets you and what you want to change, no matter what stands in your way,” said Owoseeni Roseline, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Activist from Nigeria.

They also called for skills building programmes for adult and young women so that they can mentor their peers in their communities.



Panelists during the Skills Building Workshop

UN Women also held a skills building workshop entitled “Gender Equality and Women’s Leadership in the HIV Response post 2015: Tools and Skills to make it Happen.”

The Workshop, held on the second day of the conference was attended by 92 participants and was moderated by Ms Elena Kudravtseva, UN Women’s Gender Equality HIV and AIDS Specialist and co-moderated by Mr. Robert Simiyu, Team Leader, Democratic Governance, UN Women, Kenya.

The objectives of the workshop was to sensitize participants on the tools and methods available for gender equality in the HIV response and to link them with available support on how to use these tools to improve planning, implementation, resource allocation, monitoring and evaluation of their national AIDS response to bring a positive change for men, women, boys and girls.

During this session various presentations were made on some of the tools and methods available for advancing gender equality and women’s leadership in national AIDS responses and was done in two segments.

Ms Kibibi Thomas Mbwavi, a UNAIDS Consultant, made a presentation on Lessons learnt from using



the UNAIDS Gender Assessment tool in 11 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa. The presentation showed that gender assessment results have had a positive influence to adoption of gender responsive actions in the national strategic plans and development of other key national planning documents such as global fund concept notes, national gender and HIV action plans and the new global target of 90% tested, 90% treated and 90% achieve viral suppression (90-90-90). However users of the tool would like it to be shorter and include other optional modules for humanitarian contexts.

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Ms Nazneen Damji, UN Women’s Global Policy Advisor for Gender Equality, HIV and AIDS introduced the Compendium of Gender Sensitive Indicators for HIV and AIDS. She emphasized that data for most of the indicators was already being collected but not necessarily being used to monitor progress on gender related outcomes on HIV prevalence, behaviors and access to services.



*Data has to aggregated so as to extract evidence
 Ms Lillian Mworeko- Uganda*

The second segment of the workshop focused on country level experiences in mainstreaming gender equality, involvement of people living with HIV (PLWHIV), and human rights principles in national strategic plans, monitoring and evaluation frameworks and budgets.



*Women must be at the centre of the project-
 Dr. Gasamagera Jean de Dieu*

UNWOMEN national partners and one staff made the presentations. Namely, Florence Anam (Kenya), Marta Cumbi (Mozambique), Dr. Gasamagera Jean de Dieu, (Rwanda) and Lillian Mworeko (Uganda). Representatives from Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda and Uganda made presentations on various tools being used in their respective countries.



*Women need to be integrated into programme implementation-
 Ms Marta Cumba*



*Communities must be engaged in at all levels-
 Ms Florence Anam,-Kenya*