

Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment a Key Message at 18th ICASA



Some UN Women Staff together some participants after a UN Women Session

The 18th session of the International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA) that took place in Harare, Zimbabwe on 29 November to 4 December has come to an end and UN Women was an active participant in the conference.

Ahead of the ICASA, UN Women together with partners, organized a women’s pre-conference under the theme “Fast-tracking the end of the AIDS epidemic for women in the post-2015 development framework.” The pre-conference, which took place on 27 and 28 November sought to promote a shared understanding of the needs and agenda of women living with HIV and AIDS within the SDG framework as well as the need to focus on gender equality and women’s empowerment in efforts to end AIDS.

During the ICASA, UN Women had two sessions, one on transformative leadership for gender equality and the other one a skills building workshop on gender equality and women’s leadership in the HIV Response post 2015.

UN Women’s Policy Advisor on HIV and AIDS, Caroline Nyamayemombe also moderated a session on gender based violence.

Elizabeth Mushabe the UN Women Gender and HIV Specialist UN Women, Uganda made a presentation on Elimination of Mother to Child Transmission (EMTCT) where she underscored the critical need for community and health care workers to work together in the provision of HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support.

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Here is what some of the UN Women colleagues had to say at the end of the ICASA



“ICASA provided a platform and an opportunity for women in Africa to reflect on their HIV journey, to learn lessons and strategies for the future given that HIV rates are still high among women and girls everywhere. It was a political platform for women to call for more political commitment, for accountability and to demand more resources and leadership by women to end AIDS by 2030, if not earlier,” Revai Manganje-Aalbaek, Deputy Country Representative, UN Women Zimbabwe.

“Gender issues and the empowerment of women and girls came out very strongly in almost all the discussions, including in the ICASA 2015 Declaration I am looking forward to UN Women’s strategic positioning amidst multiple players in this critical agenda,” Caroline Nyamayemombe



As ICASA 2015 comes to an end, it marks the beginning of an era for implementing strategies and programmes aimed at ending AIDS by 2030 as we work together to achieve gender equality and implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To achieve this, we need to fully empower and engage all women and girls,” Kavutha Mutuvi, Gender Advisor-HIV, UN Women, Kenya





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“Africa has clearly gone a long way to reduce HIV rates in the past decade. Encouraging results are emerging on near elimination of MTCT in African countries. More people are now on treatment and therefore living longer. The 2030 goal for 90 90 90 (90% tested, 90% treated and 90% achieve viral suppression) is attainable. However new evidence is showing risk of regression on HIV rates reduction particularly among young women (15-24) and Uganda was singled out. IPV and lack of economic choices for women also continue to increase women's vulnerability to HIV infection. UN WOMEN therefore has a big responsibility moving towards 2030 HIV/AIDS targets,” Anna Mutavati, Deputy Country Representative, UN Women Uganda.



Women and girls are a key priority in the AIDS response if we are to end AIDS by 2030. This is a strong message that came out of the ICASA. I was happy to note that all the statistics that were shared during the conference were gender disaggregated. Including young people and listening to them during the conference was great as they are a group that is most affected and need to be involved in all response actions,” Robert Simiyu, Team Leader, Democratic Governance, UN Women Kenya.

“The issue of gender was among the key messages that came out of the ICASA. This means that action must be taken to mainstream gender in all HIV response programmes. However, one thing that came out from the people visiting the UN Women booth is that most people think gender equality is about women only, but it is about equality among both men and women for the good of all,” Molline Marume, Programme Specialist, Gender, HIV and AIDS, UN Women Zimbabwe.

