

# THE ICWEA BULLETIN

AUG - SEPT 2015



The International Community of  
Women Living with HIV  
Eastern Africa (ICWEA)

## Women's position on PrEP

**O**n August 11, ICWEA convened a workshop to discuss the position of women living with HIV on Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP). Have you heard about Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)? PrEP is a strategy that involves use of antiretroviral medications (ARVs) to reduce the

risk of HIV infection in people who are HIV-negative. It is a new HIV prevention method in which people who do not have HIV infection take a pill daily to reduce their risk of becoming infected.

Recent clinical trials have shown clearly that daily, oral pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) using the antiretroviral drugs tenofovir and emtricitabine (Truvada) dramatically reduces the risk of HIV infection for men and women who take it as directed.

The Partners PrEP Demonstration Project being conducted in Uganda and Kenya among HIV serodiscordant couples provided evidence that people using PrEP had 96% reduction in the risk of acquiring HIV. This was during the Conference of Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI) in Seattle in 2015.

This revelation was a follow up on the 2011 Partners PrEP study results that showed that a 67% and 75% fewer infections among men and women who used Tenofavir and Truvada

respectively.

However, PrEP's implementation in Uganda is still in the process. There is limited or no access PrEP at the moment as government has not yet issued guidelines on usage of PrEP.

During the activity, women living with HIV agreed that PrEP is good because it gives women control over their HIV prevention options adding that the burden on acquiring PrEP should not fall on women alone but involve and engage the men too.

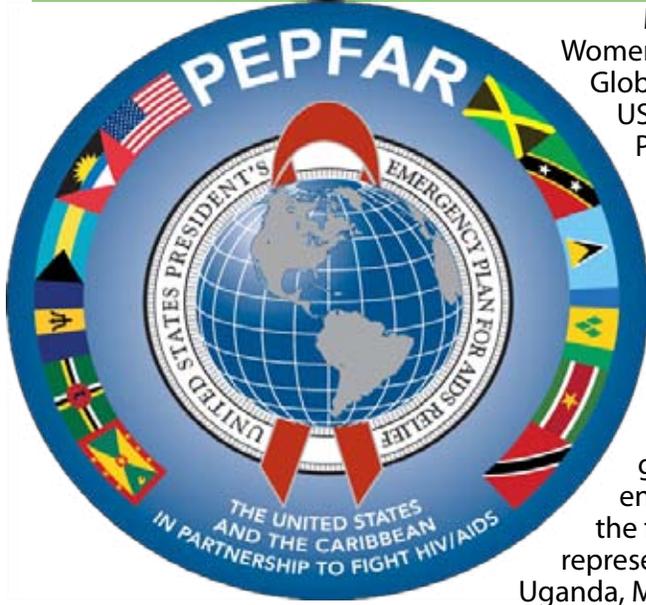
**In Partnership with AVAC  
Use of other HIV prevention  
methods is encouraged and the need  
for government to either subsidize  
or give PrEP free of charge. As a  
way forward, a pressure group was  
formed to put pressure on the gov-  
ernment et of Uganda to give guide-  
lines on the use of PrEP and create  
awareness about its existence.**



### About PrEP

PrEP" stands for Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis. The word "prophylaxis" means to prevent or control the spread of an infection or disease. The goal of PrEP is to prevent HIV infection from taking hold if you are exposed to the virus. It is therefore intended to help reduce the risk of HIV infection in people who are HIV negative.

# Pepfar country operation plan review



Margaret Happy, a staff member of the International Community of Women Living with HIV Eastern Africa (ICWEA) was invited by the Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator (OGAC) and Health Diplomacy to participate in the US President' Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) Country Operation Plan (COP) 2015 review meeting. This will take place between June 8 - 12, 2015 at Windhoek, Namibia.

The COP documents the US Government's annual investments and anticipated results in the global fight against HIV&AIDS. It is also the basis for approval of annual USG bilateral HIV and AIDS funding in most partner countries.

The purpose of the meeting is to review each country's operation plan in the year 2015 and resolve outstanding issues so that the COP can be approved for funding. Margaret will attend for the last 2 days of the meeting which will be focused on engagement by host government, multilateral and civil society stakeholders. She will discuss engagement during the COP process, future dialogue, as well as sharing the final outcomes of the COP review process. The countries that will be represented in the Namibian PEPFAR COP regional review meeting include: Uganda, Mozambique, Cameroon, Malawi, Lesotho and Namibia.

## Up dates > ICWEA at the eMTCT launch in Teso

ICWEA took part in the Elimination of Mother to Child Transmission (eMTCT) launch in Soroti which took place at the Soroti Sports Grounds. This was one of the regional campaigns in Uganda that the first lady of Uganda, Hon Janet Kataaha Museveni embarked on in 2014 to create awareness about the need to eliminate transmission of HIV to children.

On the eve of the event, ICWEA organized a Radio call in program which brought in the participation of two Young WLHIV who had accessed eMTCT services. These shared their experiences of accessing the services and urged other women to access HIV testing and services while pregnant and if found HIV positive to access service. ICWEA challenged community stigma and discrimination related to eMTCT, and urged the male partners to support their wives during this time. ICWEA also urged the implementing



partners to provide proper quality counselling to WLHIV before being initiated on Treatment so as to retain them in care and follow up on those who do not come back to complete

their treatment.

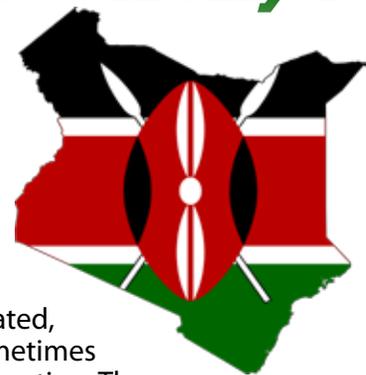
ICWEA was happy to be part of the launch ceremony as it offered an opportunity to talk about issues faced by women living with HIV in their attempts to access eMTCT services. But to our frustration that was not the case. We wrote to the organizing committee expressing our disappointment over the fact that women living with HIV were left out throughout the occasion and were not among the speakers. We were also concerned about the language used during the occasion in the presentations, speeches and entertainment as they were not stigma free.

Language has been one of the major concerns raised by women and it hinders access to eMTCT. We need a stigma free environment for women to be able to access services; the speakers, presenters and entertainers therefore need to be mindful of language used.



# Learning about reproductive health rights

ICW Kenya



Circles of women living with HIV especially in Kenya have been abuzz with talk about the court case about forced sterilisation. This case about the forced or coerced sterilization of HIV-positive women is scheduled for hearing on November 2. It is a historical and an important case on human rights of women living with HIV. and will go a long way in helping rectify the wrongs in the way our sexual and reproductive health rights are handled.

Since this continues to be a major issue, ICW Kenyan Chapter decided to hold a workshop and carry out community sensitization and education in Western Kenya on coerced sterilization as a human rights violation.

The workshop was held on September 15 for Women Living with HIV

and it empowered 40 Women Living with HIV (WLHIV) from eight counties in western Kenya on their sexual reproductive health rights and taught them to demand and reclaim their rights

There was also a discussion about the rights of WLHIV that have been exploited including; the right to have a family, a baby, sexual privacy, a right to information and knowledge and equity at work places.

The participants expressed some of the challenges they face as WLHIV. Top on the list is stigma which forces some to access health service are facilities very far from where they stay, since people there do not know them. Women living with HIV also cited sexual reproductive health rights violations, property inheritance

rights are violated, ART drugs sometimes have violent reaction. There were also complaints about the fact that some facilities require one must to go with their partner in order to be enrolled in care. In addition to this, health workers' attitude is discouraging and demeaning.

The human rights presentation was made by Ms Perez of KELIN/FIDA. She reminded participants that they are all entitled to their human Rights and requested them to read more about Human Rights in Article 45 of the Kenya Constitution.

## Up Coming



- > Kenya Court case on forced sterilization of women living with HIV on November 2.
- > The 18th International Conference on AIDS and STIs (ICASA) will be held in Zimbabwe between November 29th and

December 4th 2015.

- > The 46th Union World Conference on Lung Health Cape Town, South Africa
- > International Conference on HIV/AIDS, STDs & STIs in Canada, November 30 to December 2.

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