



International Community of Women Living with HIV & AIDS  
(ICW Kenya Chapter)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**NON-NEGOTIABLE, MY BODY, MY WOMB, MY RIGHTS, MY CHOICES, MY DECISION**

**Women living with HIV in Kenya are filing human rights lawsuit on International Human Rights Day to challenge the practice of forced and/or coerced sterilization of women living with HIV in Kenya.**

**Nairobi, Kenya 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2014 – At Milimani Law Courts**

The International Community of Women Living with HIV - Kenya (ICW-K) in collaboration with ICW Eastern Africa and ICW Global stand in solidarity with the Kenyan women living with HIV who have filed a lawsuit on this International Human Rights Day seeking justice after being forcibly and/or coercively sterilized because of their HIV status. These women represent many other women living with HIV in Kenya and around the world who have and are continuously experiencing violation of their sexual, reproductive and health rights, and whose ability to have children is taken away against their will hence negative impact on their gender identity as women.

The issue of forced and/or coerced sterilisation in Kenya was first identified in 2010 in a Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights Workshop for Women living with HIV by ICW Eastern Africa, which was then communicated to Policy Makers, Programmers and Donors during a Policy Dialogue where Open Society Institute Eastern Africa and Gender African Media Initiative later on supported ICW women in Kenya to undertake the research dubbed '**Robbed of Choice**' that documented the violations. ICW Kenya has since been at the forefront of mobilizing and documenting the sterilization experiences and undertaking advocacy to challenge and eliminate this practice. The lawsuit is therefore a culmination of the hard work of women living with HIV in Kenya.

Subjecting women (Us) to such forms of violation because of their HIV status is unacceptable. The consequences of this act undermine their (Our) self-worth and sense of identity as women and mothers; increasing their (our) vulnerability to intimate partner violence; and having a long term negative impact on their (our) mental health, wellbeing, access to land and social economic opportunities.

*“There is simply no legitimate justification for sterilizing women living with HIV against their will. It is a violation of the most fundamentally held rights of women and has devastating consequences for women living with HIV; not at a time when we boast of having one of the most progressive constitutions in the world that acknowledges these rights.”* **Inviolata Mmbwavi, ICW Kenya National Coordinator**

Women living with HIV have the right to full information about the risks, benefits and long-term impact of sterilization including sufficient time to consider the options and to exercise their decision-making autonomously.

*“We applaud the bravery of these women to step up and tell their stories. We must take action to immediately end the discriminatory practice of forced and coerced sterilization of women living with HIV in Kenya! Forced and coerced sterilization is an act of violence, a violation of human rights,*



**International Community of Women Living with HIV & AIDS  
(ICW Kenya Chapter)**

and an act of torture". **Njoki Otieno, ICW Eastern Africa Regional Vice Chairperson**

Sterilization without informed consent or under coercion is part of a systemic pattern of discriminatory violations of sexual and reproductive health and rights experienced globally by women living with HIV. The practice has been documented by ICW networks and other groups in at least 30 countries around the world. Despite differences of geography, the stories of women living with HIV who have experienced coercive and/or forced sterilization are very similar and are frequently reported in the context of prevention of vertical transmission.

ICW Kenya is hopeful that the bravery of these women in standing up for their rights and seeking justice will raise nationwide and global attention to violations of the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women living with HIV.

**For more information contact:**

**Inviolata Mwali Mmbwavi**

**National Coordinator**

**International Community of Women Living with HIV Kenya (ICW Kenya)**

**Tel. +254722749603**

**Email: [icwkenyachapter@gmail.com](mailto:icwkenyachapter@gmail.com)  
[inviom@yahoo.com](mailto:inviom@yahoo.com)**

**Facebook page: ICW, Kenya Chapter**

**Twitter: @ICW Kenya**