



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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BALANCE FOR BETTER:

Increase OPTIONS and CHOICES for Adolescent Girls and Women in our diversity

March 8, 2019, Kampala, Uganda - The International Community of Women Living with HIV Eastern Africa (ICWEA) joins the rest of world to celebrate women living with HIV for our outstanding contribution towards gender equality and equity under the global theme “**Balance for Better**”.

Women living with HIV have been at the forefront speaking out for HIV prevention strategies and supporting HIV prevention trials including Evidence for Contraceptives Options and HIV Outcomes Trial (ECHO trial) whose results are expected mid-2019.

The ECHO trial was carried out in African countries (Zambia, Kenya, South Africa, and eSwatini) but its results regardless of the scenario will have the implication across the globe and on uptake of all other types of contraceptives based on how well the countries will be prepared. The ECHO trial compared the copper IUD, Jadelle, and DMPA (commonly known as Depo-provera and Sayana Press) and to see if they have an impact on the risk of HIV acquisition.

ICWEA therefore calls upon:

- WHO, Governments, Department Partners, and Private Sector to develop plans to prepare for ECHO trial results regardless of whatever the scenario of the outcome.

For more information, please contact Margaret Happy, Advocacy Manager - International Community of Women Living with HIV Eastern African (ICWEA), Plot 1106, Ssenge - Kawanda Road, Off Kayunga, Kampala - Hoima Road, P.O.Box 32252, Kampala, Uganda, Tel. +256414531913, Mobile: +256 772 695133, Email: mhappy@icwea.org/ happy.progressio@gmail.com

Having the plan and implementing it ahead of release of ECHO results, is critical because of the possible implication of the trial outcome on uptake of all other types of contraceptives because of high prevalence use of DMPA which is one of the study arm but also mostly strongly implicated with HIV risk in Eastern Africa where there is high HIV incidences and prevalence.

- HIV prevention and reproductive health partners to ensure that girls and women including women living with HIV are given HIV prevention tools and family planning options with full information for informed choices and decision-making
- All stakeholders to ensure that there is increased commitments to addressing sexual and reproductive health needs and priorities of girls and women including women living with HIV in a rights-based, woman-centered approach.
- Donors to invest in women-led organizations to disseminate ECHO trial related information to the communities before and after the release of results in countries where ECHO trial was carried out and non-ECHO trial countries.