



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

A CALL TO ACTION

Continuation of Access to Comprehensive HIV/TB/Malaria/SRHR/MNCH Services: Scale up COVID-19 Prevention, Control and Management

A quick glimpse at the Ministry of Health of Uganda website will give you the statistics on COVID-19 in Uganda. As of 12th of June, 2021, the confirmed COVID-19 cases **were 58,515 and 408** deaths. These are and were human beings like you and I before they became mere statistics that continue to multiply every day. COVID-19 is real, there is no longer a shred of doubt about that, therefore important for all of us to respect all the Standard Operating Procedures.

The communities of People Living with HIV (PLHIV), Key and Vulnerable Populations (KVPs) applaud the Government of Uganda under the leadership of His Excellency the President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, for putting in place measures to curb the COVID-19 pandemic. We are also appreciative of all efforts being made by Development Partners, Government Ministries, Civil Society Organisations, Health Care Providers, Communities, families and individuals. We appreciate all the media houses and platforms for being a bridge to the public in the provision of information.

The effects of COVID-19 and all measures put in place to prevent, control and manage it continues to negatively impact communities. PLHIV are among the most at risk of COVID-19 due to HIV comorbidity. The previous lockdown created a very huge gap for PLHIV, KVPs, women and young people in accessing HIV/TB/SRH/MNCH service due to restrictions on transport and movement.

Majority of PLHIV, KPs, women and girls in all their diversity and young people are engaged in small businesses to fend for their lives and those of their families; use public transport to reach their work stations, many times across districts and yet for the next 42 days, providing for their families will be such a challenge.

We fear for another 42 hard days of psychological torture and thirst for our people. The consequences of these as evident during the last lockdown are Gender Based Violence, mental health breakdown, nutritional inadequacy for PLHIV, which aspects have grave effects of retarding all efforts made to improve the quality of life of PLHIV, in terms of access to treatment and care, livelihood and economic stability.

As a community, we have over time understood the importance of resilience, and we congratulate communities and families for the resilience they have exhibited during these unprecedented times.

CALL TO ACTION

We call to action all Stakeholders to use their spaces, platforms, resources and power and put in place plans to ensure continuity of access to HIV/TB/SRH/MNCH



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services; to encourage knowledge and information sharing; ensuring that implementation of the SOPs, as well as guidelines, do not result into negative consequences like stigma, discrimination, human rights violations and Gender and Sexual Violence.

- 1. That Government, Development Partners, Implementing Partners, and Civil Society Organisations work together to develop and implement a comprehensive plan to support continuity of access to HIV/TB, Sexual Reproductive and Mental Health Services for PLHIV, KVP, women and young girls including those in hard-to-reach districts like Kalangala and Buvuma that may require services from neighboring districts. The lessons learnt from the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown should be exploited.**
- 2. That Government, PEPFAR, the Global Fund and all other Development Partners should recognize the role played by our networks and structures, Peers for instance play a critical role in HIV/TB response and should be supported to deliver on their roles including reaching out to clients in their communities.**
- 3. That the Uganda Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) for the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria through the two Principal Recipients (PRs) considers reallocation of any unused resources of the COVID-19 grant to support the communities that will continue to struggle with livelihoods and access to essential commodities and tools for prevention, treatment and care services. These are critical elements for their sustainability and adherence to treatment and care.**
- 4. That Government, PEPFAR, Global Fund PRs, Civil Society Organizations consider scaling up investment in psychosocial services to enable communities cope with the impact of COVID-19. Taking cognizance of the current state of the pandemic, there is a great need for investment and ensuring 24/7 functional toll-free helplines, counselling and shelter homes.**
- 5. That the media from the various media houses scales up the joint and informative broadcasts sensitizing the public on COVID-19.**

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