



## International Community of Women Living with HIV Eastern Africa

### ICWEA STATEMENT\_16 Days of Activism

#### **Enough! ICWEA Sounds a Bold Call to end online abuse, medical discrimination, and structural violence intensify in the region**

**Date: Nov 25, 2025**

The International Community of Women Living with HIV Eastern Africa (ICWEA) raises urgent concern over the escalating **digital, institutional, and structural violence** targeting women and girls living with HIV. As the world marks 16 days of Activism 2025, under the global theme **“UNiTE to End Digital Violence Against All Women and Girls,”** ICWEA draws attention to the distinctly evolving forms of violence rooted in stigma, discrimination, and deeply entrenched patriarchal norms. Across Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania, women and girls living with HIV continue to face technology-facilitated abuses such as online shaming, cyberbullying, extortion, blackmail, and non-consensual exposure of HIV status. Digital platforms are increasingly weaponized to humiliate, silence, and endanger women extending violence from the physical sphere into phones, messages, and public online spaces.

Through our Together Halting Violence and Inequalities (THRIVE) project implemented in 3 countries in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania by ICWEA, ICW-K and DWWT with support from UNTRUST Fund, feminist voices from across the region continue to affirm that naming violence is the first step toward ending it. While traditional forms of gender-based violence persist, women are now experiencing sophisticated and heightened digital violations that intensify fear and psychological harm. As one of our regional feminists noted, *“Technology facilitated violence shames women for owning their action”*, some digital platforms have been created solely to target and ridicule women living with HIV, making violence against women and girls constant, invasive, and inescapable. As such, we continue to draw lessons from our engagement with the regional movement to End Violence against women and girls in Eastern Africa, further exposing ongoing medical and institutional violence including coercive cervical cancer screening, forced disclosure, disrespect in maternity wards, and persistent stigma in health facilities among others. These often-normalized actions are deeply harmful violations that undermine bodily autonomy and dignity. Feminists also highlighted structural and policy violence: citing criminalisation, discriminatory laws, underfunding of women-led movements, and systemic health failures, and as one leader put it, *“Systemic failures are systemic violence.”*

Additionally, stockouts, privacy breaches, stigma, and unsafe service environments are reportedly documented as new forms of violence, reinforcing a collective call to: **“Name it, Measure it, Act on it.”** Our regional feminist movement remains rooted in feminist power, resilience, youth leadership, and cross-border solidarity to end all forms of violence.



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While Technology facilitated violence takes center stage, ending violence in the digital age requires more than awareness. It requires investment in digital safety, survivor-centered policies, accountable health systems, and feminist leadership at every level. Therefore, women and girls living with HIV across Eastern Africa demand safety, dignity, and justice both online and offline. With a loud voice, ICWEA therefore joins the 2025 - 16 Days of Activism to reaffirm its commitment to Naming and Ending Violence in the Digital Age through Feminist Leadership of the regional Coalition/Movement. We continue to name technology-facilitated violence for what it is, challenging discrimination in health systems, using lessons from its violation to demand for accountability, strengthening feminist solidarity network, elevating youth and survivor leadership, and advancing digital safety and privacy rights through the following Key Asks to Stakeholders:

- Governments: Enforce and strengthen laws protecting women from digital violence; end HIV criminalization; ensure rights-based, stigma-free health care.
- Tech and telecom companies: Improve reporting pathways, curb online hate, protect privacy, and partner with women-led groups to address digital harms.
- Health systems: Eliminate forced disclosure, coercive practices, and stigma; guarantee confidentiality and respectful care for all women living with HIV.
- Donors and partners: Increase funding for feminist, youth-led, and community-led initiatives advancing digital safety and violence prevention.
- Civil society and communities: Stand in solidarity, challenge harmful norms, and support survivor-centered responses online and offline.

Women and girls living with HIV deserve safety, dignity, and respect in all spaces—homes, clinics/health facilities, communities, and digital platforms alike. When we name violence together, in all its evolving forms, we build the collective power to end it.

We choose solidarity. We choose courage. We choose to name the violence—so together, we can end it.

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