



INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF WOMEN LIVING WITH HIV EASTERN AFRICA (ICWEA)

ICWEA Tribute to Stephen Lewis

The world has lost Stephen Lewis, a renowned human rights champion who spent decades tirelessly drawing global attention to HIV and AIDS, while championing justice for the communities most affected.

Stephen Lewis was a friend to many, including ICWEA and our membership. He leaves behind a powerful legacy of courage, solidarity, and unwavering commitment to human rights.

“Some deaths are too painful. Stephen Lewis' death will remain painful,” says Lillian Mworeko, Executive Director of ICWEA and Stephen’s mentee.

ICWEA joins the global HIV movement, women’s rights advocates, and justice champions in mourning his passing. We extend our deepest condolences to Ilana, his family, loved ones, colleagues, and all those across the world who were inspired and strengthened by his voice and leadership.

To ICWEA, Stephen Lewis was more than a global statesman and advocate. He was a committed ally who stood with women living with HIV and with grandmothers, who are so often left behind, not only in principle, but in practice.

Together with his co-director, Paula Donovan, Stephen stood in solidarity with ICWEA during one of the most painful and defining moments in our movement: the case of the late Rosemary Namubiru. Rosemary was sentenced to three years in prison after being wrongly accused in a case that became emblematic of HIV criminalisation. During this difficult period, Stephen Lewis, Paula Donovan, a team of lawyers, and ICWEA stood together in the pursuit of justice and firmly challenged the injustice, stigma, and dehumanisation that Rosemary endured. Their solidarity sent a powerful message: that women living with HIV deserve dignity, protection, and justice, not criminalisation and shame.

Stephen’s support to ICWEA also extended beyond advocacy. Through the Stephen Lewis Foundation, ICWEA received support that strengthened our work and helped advance the rights, health, and leadership of women living with HIV across Eastern Africa.

We also fondly remember the honour of hosting Stephen Lewis as Chief Guest, alongside former President Festus Mogae of Botswana, during the official opening of ICWEA's office. His presence at that milestone was a powerful affirmation of our work, our movement, and the importance of community-led leadership in the HIV response.

Stephen Lewis lived a life of conviction. He used his voice to challenge injustice, confront inequality and inequity, and amplify the lived realities of women and communities too often pushed to the margins. His legacy will live on in the movements he strengthened, the causes he championed, and the lives he touched across the globe.

At ICWEA, we honour his memory with deep gratitude and profound respect.

Rest well, Stephen Lewis.

Thank you for standing with us, believing in justice, and helping shape a more dignified and equitable world for women living with HIV. Your legacy lives on.