

*Confined by COVID: women & girls living with & affected by HIV in East & Southern Africa  
Their challenges, their responses and what is needed next*

ITPC / Salamander Trust / Making Waves collaboration  
around HIV/SRHR linkages

Presentation by Making Waves researchers:

Joyce Ouma | Jacquelyne Alesi | Nunu Diana Alison | Martha Tholanah

Making Waves Network

January 2021



# *Background pre-COVID research: 'Are we following the WHO 2017 Guideline on the SRHR of women living with HIV?'*

ITPC / Salamander Trust / Making Waves collaboration around HIV/SRHR linkages



Joyce Ouma

- Participatory, women in all their diversity
- Women's SRHR priorities
- WHO 2017 SRHR Guideline: meaningful involvement in research
  
- ❑ CROI research: **March 2020**: 198 women; 28 countries – partner agencies: ICW East Africa, Africaid; survey; interviews; FGDs; lit. review
  
- ❑ COVID-19 research: **Oct 2020**: 30 women; 10 countries, E & Southern Africa; rapid brief research: cascade interview approach

# Key Quotes from March/April 2020



*"Who supports you? **Nobody supports us; we are supported by our passion.**"* Interviewee, Southern/East Africa

"Women reported a gap between their experiences and the friendly, safe, supportive and non-judgmental services they seek. Such services would ensure that all women are able to access SRHR without experiencing institutional discrimination and violence. **Peer support provided by women and their organizations is often the only avenue** for such non-judgmental care."

"The women who were consulted pointed out that they have **repeatedly made all of the recommendations listed below**, over decades, in many successive documents produced by women living with HIV."

# Quotes from October 2020:

## Impact of COVID-19 on women and girls



Joyce Ouma

### The Black Dog

*“COVID-19 has just made an already bad situation worse. Adolescent girls and young women were not accessing services before COVID-19, they are most definitely not doing so right now, and COVID-19 has only aggravated the situation. Women were exposed to violence before COVID-19. Young women were not getting information, commodities or even services before COVID-19. But because COVID-19 is here, **we have found the big black dog to put the blame on.**”*



To read and view more, see [here](#)



# Violence



*“Adolescent girls report being **raped** by brothers and fathers. They are also being **beaten** by older family members. Such cases are increasing.*

***Intimate partner violence** is rampant. Police are not taking reports as they say people should **stay at home** because of the Coronavirus.*

*Access to **justice is denied** while women and girls remain in unsafe environments where they are continuously violated physically and emotionally.*

*The **economic** situation also **worsens** the violence faced by women. As the opportunities for earning diminish, intimate partner violence escalates.”*





# Contraception



*“Women are not able to make **decisions** about sex and how or when to have children. It was also a problem before COVID-19 – and during COVID-19 it means even if people wanted to use a **condom**, they can not access it - so they couldn’t use it.*

*Access to **contraceptives** was hard, as access to **transport** was not possible during lockdown. For those who did get to clinic, access to family planning was not the **priority** of the facility – **COVID-19** was; and emergency services were more prioritised. So, if you come for family planning, they said please go home – we only do it once a week, and on that day they only take a certain number, so you may not get it. If you do, **you don’t get a choice.**”*



# Funders



*“COVID-19 has highlighted that **attitudes** of funders need to change. Right now members and communities are more concerned about **welfare** than advocacy for their rights. They are looking at **food** security, financial security, and **SRH**, more than looking at how to advocate for their rights and freedoms as queer women. **Livelihoods** are at stake and people are suffering.*

*Not many funders are coming through. The few who come through have such **stringent conditions** that grassroots organisations like ours cannot meet. It’s not fair. We have a large membership of women, but because we are not registered and have not received funding before, there are **barriers** to us being supported by donors.”*



SRHR violations, IPV and other VAGW



# OUR VOICES

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON WOMEN  
AND GIRLS' HEALTH AND RIGHTS

OUR CALL FOR ACTION  
TO DONORS, NGOS  
AND GOVERNMENTS

**Urgently support** the vital work of women and girls in their communities

**Uphold our SRHR as essential** – even in a pandemic!

**Ensure everyone has enough to eat**, and women and girls living with HIV do not have to take ARVs on an empty stomach

**Ensure COVID-19 responses respect privacy and confidentiality** for women and girls living with HIV

**COVID-19 responses must address and prevent violence** against women and girls

**Our digital inclusion is vital** – but make sure you meet our other priorities too!

**Provide flexible, creative, accessible funding** for organisations led by women and girls during and beyond this COVID-19 crisis



*“COVID-19 has been likened to an X-ray, revealing fractures in the fragile skeleton of the societies we have built. It is exposing fallacies and falsehoods everywhere:*

*The lie that free markets can deliver healthcare for all;*

*The fiction that unpaid care work is not work;*

*The delusion that we live in a post-racist world;*

*The myth that we are all in the same boat....”*

UN Secretary General  
Mandela Lecture 2020



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# Our calls to action and key messages to the UN



Joyce Ouma

## OUR CALL FOR ACTION

### Uphold our SRHR as essential – even in a pandemic!



Continue to ensure that provision of SRHR and HIV services during a pandemic is non-negotiable, and do this in ways that feel safe for women and girls living with HIV.



**Key message: Ensure SRHR of all women & girls living with HIV in all our diversity**

*Including girls & young women  
Including women with disabilities*





OUR CALL FOR ACTION TO NGOs AND GOVERNMENTS



Ensure everyone has enough to eat, and women and girls living with HIV do not have to take ARVs on an empty stomach



Jacquelyne  
Alesi



**Key Message: WHO: recognise & address the specific issues facing women living with HIV: don't just mix our priorities with other issues**

*Including perinatal care, motherhood & violence at home and in healthcare settings*

OUR CALL FOR ACTION TO DONORS AND GOVERNMENTS

**COVID-19 responses must address and prevent violence against women and girls**



**Fund services** to respond to and prevent VAWG. Consult women and girl-led organisations on innovative ways to provide essential services that do not breach our rights, and COVID-19 policies that do not increase or exacerbate violence.





## OUR CALL FOR ACTION TO NGOS AND GOVERNMENTS

# COVID-19 responses must ensure privacy and confidentiality



**Offer women and girls choice** about how to access services, and ensure we are not left without ARVs and contraception. Consult with women and girls on more innovative ways of providing essential services that avoid breaching privacy and confidentiality.



**Key Message: UNAIDS Regional Office: take up action on confidentiality with country UNAIDS offices**

*Including issues facing women in humanitarian contexts*

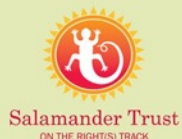
*What we are doing to follow up on the findings*

## OUR CALL FOR ACTION TO DONORS AND NGOS

# Our digital inclusion is vital – BUT make sure you meet our other priorities too!



**Budget** for devices, digital skills training and ongoing (advance) payments for data bundles for women and girls and their organisations. This ensures we can bring community lived expertise and experience to COVID-19 responses. Do not forget our other priorities – like food and medicine.





## OUR CALL FOR ACTION TO DONORS AND GOVERNMENTS

### Urgently support the vital work of women and adolescent girls in their communities



Recognise and support our vital work in our communities. Be flexible! Allow funds to be re-orientated towards more holistic responses to COVID-19.



Martha Tholanah



**Key Message: Women in communities are *still* not being included or considered in planning and consultations. *Include us* in early warning systems and emergency preparedness planning, which must include affected communities**

*This must include sex workers, women who use drugs, women with disabilities, LGBT+ women.*

**ENSURE FUNDING FOR US & OUR WORK**

## OUR CALL FOR ACTION TO DONORS AND NGOS

**Provide flexible, creative, accessible funding for women and girl-led organisations during and beyond this crisis**



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## Key Messages:

**All:** Ensure SRHR of all women & girls living with HIV in all our diversity

**WHO:** Recognise & address the specific issues facing women living with HIV: don't just mix our priorities with other issues

**UNAIDS** Regional Office: take up action on confidentiality with country UNAIDS offices

*Include us* in early warning systems and emergency preparedness planning, which must include affected communities

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# Acknowledgements



**Virtual interviews:** *Botswana:* Boingotlo Gupta; *Eswatini:* Precious Shongwe;  
*Kenya:* Joyce Amondi Ouma; Phelister Abdalla; *Namibia:* Makena Henguwa;  
*South Africa:* Nomfundo Lorraine Eland; *South Sudan:* Ade Nunu Diana Alison;  
*Uganda:* Jacquelyne Alesi; *Zambia:* Mwenya Chiti

**Virtual interviewers:** Martha Tholanah, Emma Bell, Fiona Hale

**National interviews:** *Kenya* national interviewer: Joyce Amondi Ouma; Interviewees: Delma Chiheny, Idah Perez, Gladys Asinyen, and anonymous contributors | *South Sudan* national interviewer: Ade Nunu Diana Alison; Interviewees: anonymous contributors | *Uganda* national interviewer: Jacquelyne Alesi; Interviewees: Gladys Nanbayo, Nagujja Olivia, and anonymous contributors | *Zimbabwe* national interviewer: Martha Tholanah; Interviewees: Mercy Musiyiwa, Janet Tatenda Bhila, Angela Jambo, Nandi D. Chinowawa, Mary Audry Chard

**Messages and Call for Action images:** Jane Shepherd

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# References

To learn more about this research on the effects of COVID-19 during lockdown, and the prior research study, which presented at CROI in March 2020, and in the advocacy brief in April 2020 , please visit

<https://tinyurl.com/SalamanderTrustCOVIDEffects>





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