

Our Voices:

Impact of COVID-19 on women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights in Eastern and Southern Africa

VIDEO TRANSCRIPTS

Salamander Trust,
International Treatment Preparedness Campaign (ITPC),
Making Waves



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In August-September 2020, with support from ITPC, Salamander Trust and Making Waves consulted with 30 women in 10 counties in Southern and East Africa. Ten interviews took place virtually with women leading community efforts to address HIV and SRHR in Uganda, Kenya, Namibia, Botswana, Eswatini, Tanzania, South Africa, South Sudan, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Four of these women then conducted in-person or phone interviews with a further twenty women living with HIV - five each from Uganda, Zimbabwe, Kenya and South Sudan - in acknowledgment that the digital divide excludes many women.

The women involved are living with HIV or working with women and girls living with HIV. They range in age from 17 to 54, and live in urban, rural or peri-urban areas. They include adolescents living with HIV, young women, pregnant women, mothers married and single, women living with disabilities and co-morbidities, women who are engaged in sex work, women who use drugs, LGBTQI+ women and women who experience racism. Some have had COVID-19. Many of them have stepped up their activities to promote gender equality and SRHR throughout the pandemic, often at considerable personal cost.

Their experiences illustrate that there will be no ethical, effective, sustainable response to COVID-19 without women being at the centre of decision-making around their SRHR.

We are pleased to share here **transcripts of short videos from Kenya, South Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe**, summarising the issues raised by women living with HIV in each country.



Martha Tholanah, Zimbabwe

Hello, my name is Martha Tholanah, I live in Zimbabwe, I am part of the Making Waves Network.

In August, I was part of a team of women around East and Southern Africa interviewing women living with HIV, to find out how young women living with HIV are coping during COVID-19 around their SRHR.

The issues coming out were really emotionally painful to hear how women are suffering during COVID-19. They were already suffering before COVID-19 came, and the way they are suffering even more, around confidentiality, around access, around security – they are not safe at home because there is increased GBV, they can't reach services, they also have other issues to deal with around stigma in terms of their HIV status and being young, and also for some of them it's also about their sexuality, sexual orientation, but also now with COVID-19 it has increased because when family members have been suspected of being COVID-19 positive it has been a challenge as the community stigmatises them.

It has been difficult to get support for the women, there are a few organisations but they are spread thin.

Another issue was around structural racism, which also made me think around 'have I contributed?', because we also have a minority in Zimbabwe in terms of the mixed race community, yet we find the communities where they have traditionally lived, no one is purposefully reaching out to them. These are things we need to look at. We need to look at young women, but also go to older women who are HIV positive who are struggling with their own issues around aging with HIV, around other chronic conditions, and medication being expensive, considering the economic crisis in Zimbabwe.

Thank you.



Acknowledgements

Videos:

- Kenya: Joyce Amondi Ouma
- South Sudan: Ade Nunu Diana Alison
- Uganda: Jacquelyne Alesi
- Zimbabwe: Martha Tholanah

Virtual interviews:

- Botswana: Boingotlo Gupta
- Eswatini: Precious Shongwe
- Kenya: Joyce Amondi Ouma
- Kenya: Phelister Abdalla
- Namibia: Makena Henguva
- South Africa: Nomfundo Lorraine Eland
- South Sudan: Ade Nunu Diana Alison
- Tanzania: Anonymous
- 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

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For further information, see <https://tinyurl.com/SalTCOVIDfx>

