

Supplementary information for e-poster no. P0925 for FIGO Conference 2021:

## “It's COVID's fault!”: How has COVID-19 affected the SRHR of women living with HIV in East and Southern Africa?

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### Why a ‘syndemic’ approach?

A syndemic approach recognises not just conventional co-morbidities but also the multiple socio-economic [determinants](#) and structural drivers behind a situation. In the case described here, the effects of COVID and HIV are worsened by multiple SRHR [violations](#), gender [inequality](#), other [violence](#) and related [mental](#) health issues, facing women and girls living with HIV. See more [here](#).

### Why ‘collaborative research’?

Research conducted by community members is often dismissed as ‘anecdotal’ and not proper research. Yet the co-researchers in this study described how this process has built collective self-help and support systems amongst those who took part. In addition, reviews of community-based participatory research by healthcare providers have demonstrated how it can be highly effective in building trust between healthcare providers and those they seek to support, thereby improving the quality and effectiveness of the care [provided](#). WHO also recommends meaningful involvement of women living with HIV in all research affecting their [lives](#).

### What can be done to improve women’s SRHR and gender equity to prepare for future pandemics?

The vital work of women and girls living with HIV on SRHR, HIV and COVID-19 in their communities around the world is being ignored by governments and donors. Donors, governments and others working on SRHR should urgently support this vital work of women and girls in their [communities](#). WHO does not currently have any guidance about COVID policies in the context of HIV and gender or [women](#). We call on WHO to do this urgently, to support governments to implement suitable policies. We also recommend that WHO Department of Global HIV, Hepatitis and STI Programmes follows the recommendations of three recent articles regarding the critical role that gender equality plays in effective global health investment (WHO TDR [2020](#); Ravindran et al [2021](#); Wenham and Davies [2021](#)). We also recommend use of our [apolitical](#) checklist, to ensure gender mainstreaming in the context of COVID; and the UNAIDS-commissioned ALIV[H]E framework, which describes an applied research framework, to best harness the rich insights of women most affected in creating effective policies and [programmes](#).