

Lasting community-led **movement-building** is needed for ethical, effective & sustainable gender-transformative social norms changes: *not* top-down quick-fix policies

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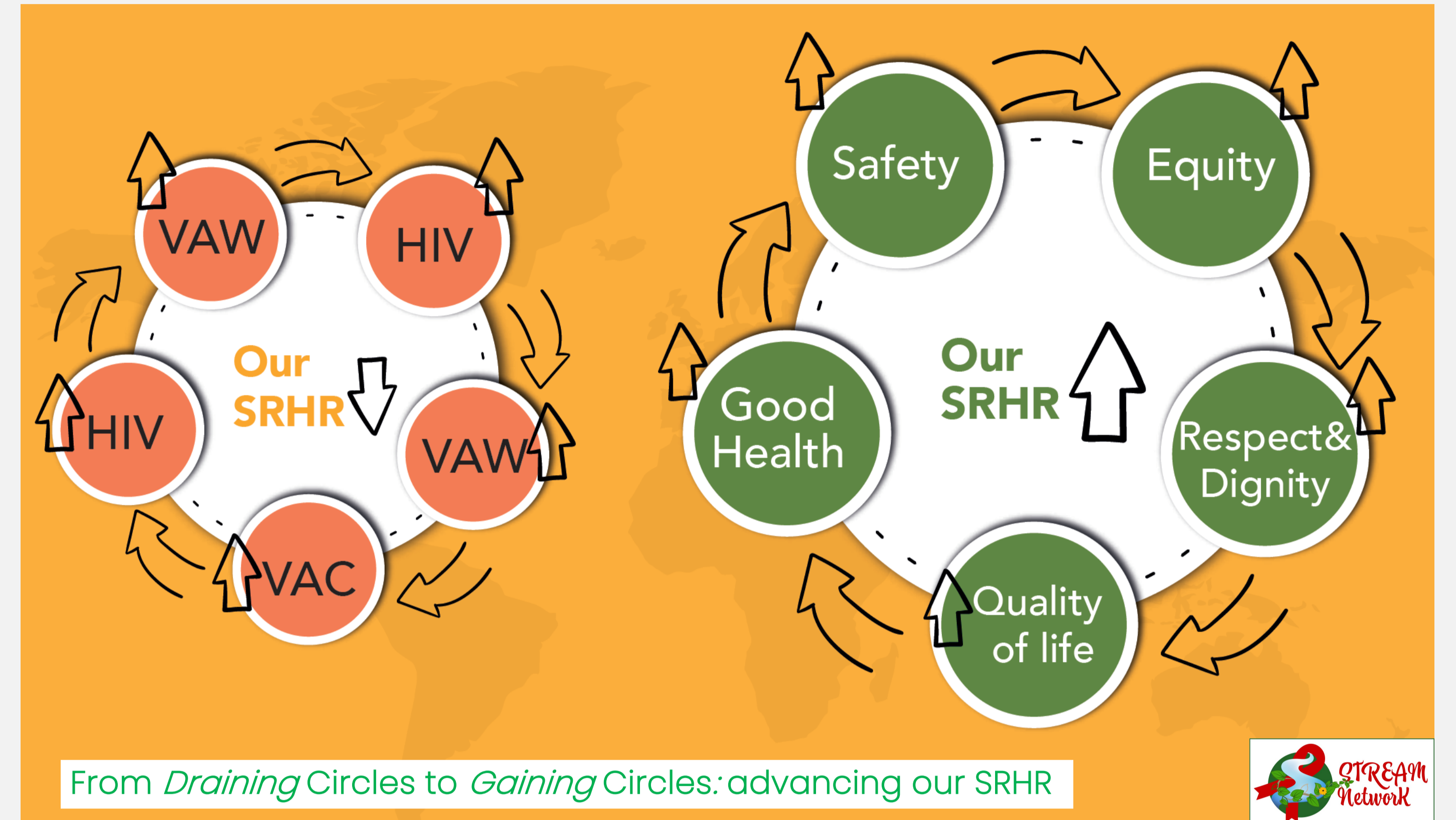


“Streaming Ahead Or A Top-down Trickle? Gender-transformative Social Norms Change Through Our Movements: Lessons Learned From The STREAM Network”

Background: Global evidence states that:

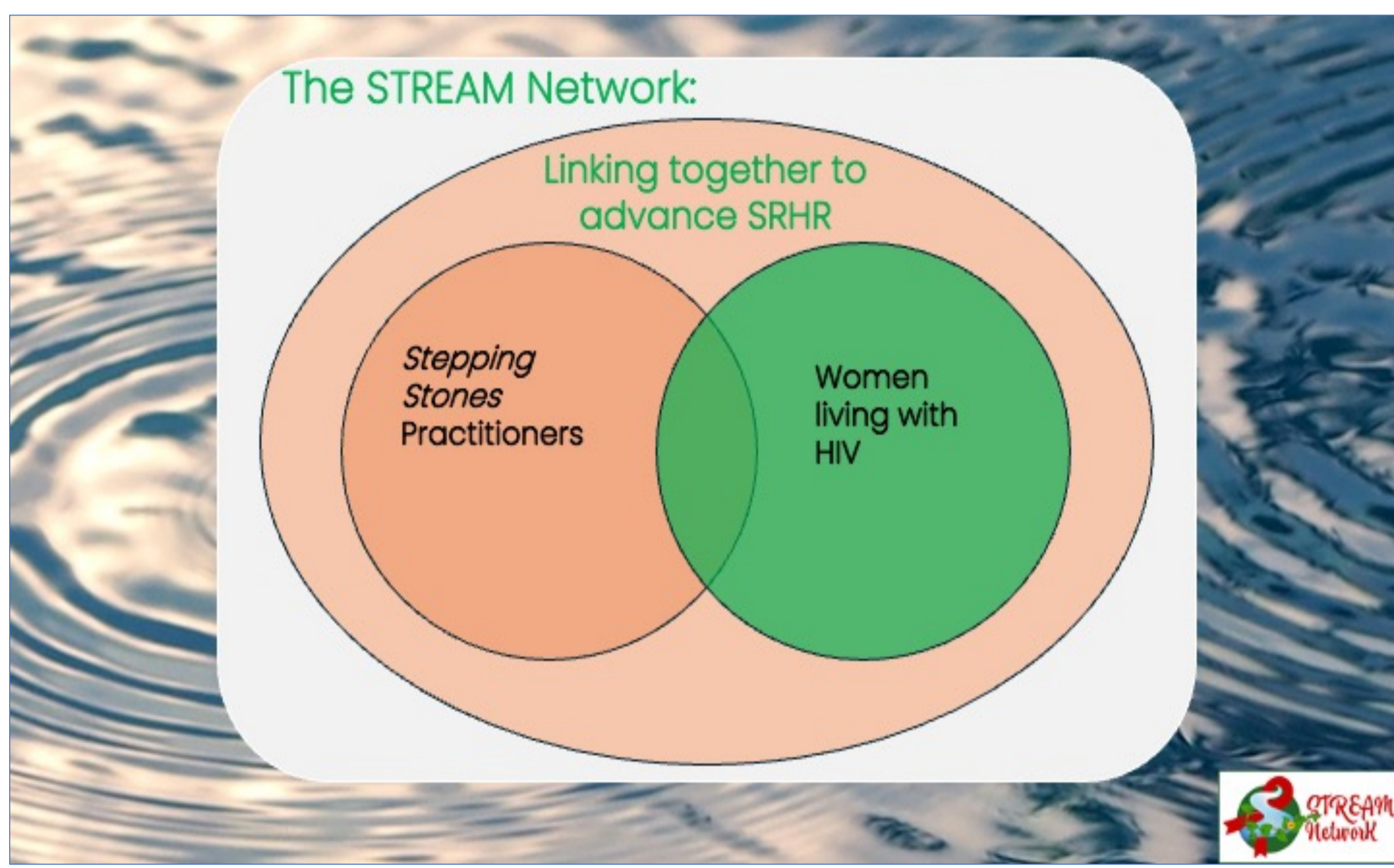
- 25% of all women experience violence (VAW);
- VAW increases women’s HIV acquisition by 1.5%;
- VAW can start or worsen on HIV diagnosis;
- VAW restricts women’s access to SRH services;
- Violence against *children* (VAC) can also lead to *adult* experience or perpetration of VAW;
- This can lead to *further* transmissions of HIV.

So **violence** and **HIV** can have *circular* life-long links, affecting our sexual and reproductive rights (SRHR).



From *Draining* Circles to *Gaining* Circles: advancing our SRHR

Images Credit: STREAM Network 2022



Global evidence also demonstrates that national-level VAW-reduction efforts *only* succeed where *independent* women’s rights networks thrive.

“... Autonomous movements articulate the social perspectives of marginalized groups, transform social practice, and change public opinion. ...”
Htun and Wheldon 2012

However, HIV policies have largely been siloed, bio-medical, and individualistic, focused on ending women’s ‘dropouts’ and ‘adherence failures’; not on supportive society-wide, social-norms change.

Therefore, we created **the STREAM Network**, to scale an evidence-based, community-led, holistic, gender-transformative social-norms change-programme, *Stepping Stones*, to prevent, reduce and mitigate the effects of VAWC and advance SRHR, across the life-span -
- **through networks / movement-building.**

Lessons learnt: Combining lived experiences of women living with HIV with gender-transformative social-norms-change trainers’ skills, across genders, generations, status and borders, creates inspiring new opportunities for shared learning and lasting transformation.

Everyone is committed to this long-term gender-transformative, rights-based, cross-generational learning process, to support networks of women living with HIV to reduce violence and achieve holistic SRHR for themselves, partners and children.

However, national STREAM teams face ongoing challenges through current HIV policy focuses. Top-down, quick-fix, individualistic, bio-medical models inhibit lasting real world **movement-led** processes: so VAWC and HIV stigma remain rife.

CONCLUSIONS/NEXT STEPS:

Long-term, gender-transformative, society-wide, **movement-led** social norms change is key to ethical, effective and sustainable HIV responses. The STREAM Network will continue to advocate for this, based on the clear global evidence-base of what works to reduce VAW.

Description:

Long-term Movement Building

Forty-two East and Southern African long-term male (11) and female (14) *Stepping Stones* trainers and women living with HIV from there, plus Argentina, Cameroon and India (19), (aged 25-79), gathered in September 2022 to create the international STREAM Network. (STREAM = *Stepping Stones* Trainers Engaged with Activist Movements). *Stepping Stones* users from Malawi and Timor-Leste have also now joined STREAM.

In 2024, team members developed national-specific STREAM Network strategic plans. Each national team seeks to train women and men living with HIV as *Stepping Stones* facilitators, to run programmes within their own networks and communities: to stop, reduce and mitigate violence against women and children (VAWC), promote community-wide trauma-aware support for people living with HIV, and uphold their SRHR.



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