

ICW



INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF  
WOMEN LIVING WITH HIV

2014–2016

ICW GLOBAL STRATEGIC PLAN

# ICW



International Community of Women Living with HIV (ICW)  
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# Executive Summary

The International Community of Women Living with HIV (ICW) is the only global network by and for women living with HIV. Established in 1992 by women living with HIV as a response to the consistent silencing and marginalization of the concerns of women living with HIV, the network has been at the forefront of ensuring that women living with HIV are at the center of responses to HIV and AIDS since its inception.

ICW continues to influence and contribute to the women's movement, the feminist movement, and the sexual and reproductive rights movement. We operate at multiple levels: individual, local, national, regional, and global. In all of our work, it is the grassroots voices and experiences of women living with HIV, and our daily struggles and lived realities that inform and shape the ICW agenda.

ICW places self-determination at the core of our ethos. Our values ensure that we are inclusive, we address women's inequality, that we are constantly reflective and committed to change internally and externally, and that we emphasize self-care as a vital component for our members' well-being.

**Our Vision:** ICW envisions a world where all women living with HIV live free of gender oppression, realizing and claiming our full rights inclusive of sexual, reproductive, legal, social, economic and health rights.

**Our Mission:** We exist to lead efforts towards securing and improving the quality of life for women living with HIV. We do this by mobilizing, organizing, advocating, mentoring and raising consciousness on the issues that directly impact our lives.

In order to fulfill our vision and mission, we will utilize two key strategies:

**Strategy One:** To build a vibrant movement of powerful and informed women living with HIV who realize and claim their rights at a personal and societal level.

**Strategy Two:** To define and advance the agenda of women living with HIV and undertake strategic advocacy efforts to ensure the realization of our human rights.

Our two-pronged focus for the next 3 years is building our network, ensuring that our members have greater agency in their lives, improving the lives of women living with HIV, and ensuring that the human rights abuses we face are recognized and action is taken to end them.

# Section One: Who We Are

ICW is the voice of women living with HIV, in all our diversity. We work in 120 countries and through 10 regional networks: Asia Pacific, Caribbean, Central Africa, East Africa, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), North America Southern Africa, and West Africa, and the Chapter of Young Women and Girls (CYWAG). We are committed to addressing the multiple oppressions experienced by women living with HIV across the globe. We believe that our members' experiences should inform what we do and how we do it.

To this end, we utilize a bottom-up approach – ensuring that our members' voices shape our organizational agenda. The International Steering Committee (ISC and Global Office in partnership with ICW Regional Networks) translate the practical needs and goals of our members into strategies and action that achieve our advocacy goals and objectives. We collectively challenge the structural, systemic, policy and programmatic inequities that undermine the HIV response in order to address the concerns affecting women living with HIV, secure our needs and rights and realize our hopes.

We are a women's organization with a highly skilled membership that uses a gender framework and feminist analysis to understand our challenges and determine solutions.

We have big hearts and a strong desire to change the world for women living with HIV. As the only global network for women living with HIV run by and for women living with HIV, we speak to the concerns of women living with HIV and mobilize them to take action. Our collective action is our strength. While gender inequalities may create disparities outside our network, inside ICW, it is gender that brings us together, creating a safe place for us to share experiences.

## Our History

ICW was founded in response to the unmet needs of women living with HIV and the exclusion of the

voices of women living with HIV from critical spaces and dialogues about the HIV response. In 1991, an international meeting of the Global Network of People Living with HIV and AIDS was held in London. Women living with HIV from around the world came to the meeting with stories, experiences, and questions, but their voices were silenced and excluded from all discussions. Their voices were ignored and their issues were seen as secondary. In response to this exclusion and marginalization, the inspiring women advocates in attendance decided to unite and for the first time in history, a group of women living with HIV organized to form a response to HIV with a focus on gender and the different lived experiences of women. The following year, in 1992, the International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW) debuted at the first Pre-Conference of Women Living with HIV at the International AIDS Conference held in Amsterdam.

Today, over 20 years later, ICW continues to be the only network run by and for women living with HIV. There are over 15,000 members of the ICW network that inform our agenda, volunteer to share their lived experiences, and build networks of support in their local communities. Our members are brought together by a shared experience of living with HIV and by the desire to advocate for our rights and our health and the rights of other women living with HIV.

ICW has been a collective force for women living with HIV that has gained respect and credibility over its 20-year history. ICW has established a strong



presence in global forums earning a voting seat on the International AIDS Conference Coordinating Committee and Consultative Status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council. Our global advocacy program advocates for the needs of women, adolescent women, and girls living with HIV in key global decision-making spaces and ensures that all women living with HIV have a voice in development of policy that affects our lives.

ICW's advocacy has brought to light critical human rights abuses experienced by women living with HIV including violations of sexual and reproductive rights such as forced and coerced sterilization, and addressed the critical issues of stigma and discrimination, criminalization, domestic violence and other forms of private and institutionalized violence against women living with HIV. Our efforts have spurred litigation, action and a global dialogue about the human and sexual, reproductive health rights of women living with HIV.

Recognizing that ICW is also part of a broader movement for health and women's rights, the network also established strategic alliances with other women's networks and organizations, including key players in the fight against HIV and AIDS and Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) around the world.

ICW has mentored and supported regional networks established under the ICW umbrella. These regional networks have given women the ability to advocate for their specific regional issues while being supported by the larger global networks. In addition to this, in 2011, ICW began the first international Chapter for Young Women, Adolescents and Girls, building off of ICW's

history of Young Women's Dialogues. This chapter has created a space for young women to advocate for their unique rights, while being mentored by other women in the HIV movement. It also recognizes the diversity of needs of women living with HIV along the continuum of their lifespan.

ICW has researched, produced, and provided input for many publications over the years – often to fill the gap on issues facing women living with HIV. Some of these publications include:

- *The Positive Women's Survival Kit* which was translated into Spanish French and Portuguese
- *Understanding the perspectives and/ or experiences of women living with HIV regarding Option B+ in Uganda and Malawi.* A research report in partnership with GNP+.
- *Diamonds: Stories of Women from the Asia Pacific Network of People Living with HIV Asia and the Pacific.* ICW follow this effort with reports to the Commission on the Status of Women highlighting forced and coerced sterilization and abortion across the Asia Pacific Region.
- *Vital Voices: Finding from consolations of people living with HIV on the prevention of vertical transmission.* A research report in partnership with GNP+.
- ICW newsletter in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese and distributed globally.
- The ICW Governance Manual, Policies and Procedures Manual, and Finance Manual.

## Section Two: How We Work

As an international network of women living with HIV scattered across the world, we do our work in different spheres of influence and in diverse contexts:

- At a global level, building our movement, leading advocacy campaigns and ensuring that our issues are prioritized in the campaigns and work of others.
- At a regional and national level, building local movements of women living with HIV that respond to regional and national concerns and contexts. These issues inform our global agenda.
- In partnership with organizations of people living with HIV, women's organizations, feminist organizations and with organizations in the reproductive justice movements and the human rights movement.

The regions of ICW work collectively to advocate and provide support for the work of the regional networks and our membership, all of who are women living with HIV from around the globe.

We are a network of individual women living with HIV, but we have a shared, collective agenda and work collaboratively at the local, national, regional and global levels. ICW members lead our national and regional chapters and they do the important work on the ground in local communities. Each region builds on the work rising out of the local and national context to address concerns at a regional level.

Each region is responsible for electing representatives that will sit on the ICW International Steering Committee. These women play the role of bringing the regional and national voices of the membership to the global sphere. Each sphere of advocacy is equally important, and advocacy efforts at the local and national level inform and define the issues prioritized at the regional and global level.

The ISC, the regional coordinators and staff, and ICW members who have taken on leadership roles work to mobilize and inspire other women to become visible in their communities, to overcome fears, and to defend their rights. ICW leadership represent ICW's viewpoint and concerns in the central decision making bodies in the context of HIV and gender equality, ensuring that women living with HIV are involved in the formulation of policies and programs that affect us directly.

In March 2014, ICW's Global Office moved to Nairobi, Kenya from Buenos Aires, Argentina. The ICW Global Office consists of a small team of women who are committed to implementing the political decisions of the ISC. They are responsible for supporting the ISC and to work at the global level to push ICW Global Advocacy Agenda.



ICW is a global partnership of independent regions aligned under a global mission. ICW's regional networks are politically, operationally and financially autonomous with each setting its advocacy agenda in response to the specific context in which they operate. However, ICW's regions strategize collectively and work in concert. Some regions such as East Africa, Southern Africa, Western Africa, Asian Pacific (WAP+), and Latin America (ICW Latina) have functioning Boards and paid staff. Other regions such as, North

America, Middle East and North Africa, the Caribbean, Central Africa, Europe and Central Asia have limited or no funding for paid staff to carry out programs and coordinate the regional networks. In some cases, our regions are guided by grassroots working groups and other alternatives to Boards. In some cases, they have volunteer coordinators who assist in the activities of the region. All regions are guided by their membership, and all regions have the opportunity to bring their voices to the global level through the ISC.

# Section Three: Our Values

Our policies are intended to benefit all members regardless of culture, age, religion, sexuality, disability, social or economic status, class, or race.

## Accountability

ICW staff, governing bodies, and members are accountable for their actions and use of funds in fulfilling their legal obligations.

## Self Determination and Emancipation

ICW values the transformative leadership and power of women living with HIV in realizing our rights. We will act in solidarity to create opportunities to attain all our human rights and to maintain these rights. We value peer support, mentoring and capacity building as ways to enable our members to become more self-determined in their lives.

## Integrity and Critical Reflection

Our accountability is entrenched in our principles and interwoven in our practices. We will work together as a global movement, remembering to take the time to reflect critically on our lessons learned both as individuals and as a network.

## Feminisms and Gender Equality

We are committed to raising consciousness about gender imbalance and inequalities. We commit to using schools of feminist thought to critique current systems that continue to oppress women and girls living with HIV.

## Commitment to Advocacy

This commitment is founded on the knowledge that advocacy is a potent tool to promote the rights of women living with HIV and to influence and impact policy and programming decisions. Our commitment is focused on ensuring that as women living with HIV, we have a voice and meaningful participation in the relevant decision-making and policy-making bodies on issues important to our lives. We are committed to creating alternative spaces for power relations in order to set the agenda on matters that concern us.

## Self-Care

We value the time and tremendous energy that women give to ICW. Individual self-care is important for women living with HIV to sustain motivation and support the work they are doing to improve the lives of other women. It is of equal importance that we support our peers and ourselves to ensure we are able to maintain a healthy physical, mental, and spiritual balance in work, play, and caring for our loved ones. ICW strongly advocates self-care for women living with HIV in the advocacy movement.

# Section Four: Our Purpose and Ethos

There are over 20 million women living with HIV globally; yet, we continue to be marginalized within responses to HIV. Women living with HIV are frequently underrepresented in policy or not represented at all. As women we have had a constant struggle to ensure that our issues are heard, acknowledged and responded to.

We consistently raise the fact that our lived realities are in many ways significantly different to those of men living with HIV; and as such different thinking and solutions are needed in order to address the many challenges we face.

We also acknowledge that as women living with HIV we are not a homogenous group – that, for example, issues facing migrant women living with HIV are not the same as those facing transgender women, nor are they the same as those facing middle class women living in the global north. Likewise, the issues of lesbians living with HIV are different to those facing HIV positive heterosexual women. Our diversity spans age, geography, the urban/rural divide, sexual orientation and gender identity, race, class, occupation, mobility – and responses to our challenges need to be complex, diverse and sophisticated.

Our history as a movement speaks to the marginalization of women living with HIV. In our 20-year history much ground has been gained and there is a much greater focus on the needs of and issues facing women living with HIV; however, as we approach the post-2015 agenda there is still a critical role for ICW:

- Blatant human rights abuses against women living with HIV continue in every region – ranging from the prejudices of health care providers to forced abortion and sterilization. Any gains in sexual and reproductive rights have been reversed for women living with HIV.

- Prevention, treatment, and care for people living with HIV is still generalized and gender blind – research is seldom gender disaggregated, the differences in women and men’s bodies are not recognized in treatment regimes, and women-specific opportunistic infections do not get the resources and recognition that they require in order for us to live better and longer lives.
- Furthermore, women living with HIV are excluded from many other research agendas such as HIV and aging, PreP, gender, and adherence.
- Women in ‘generalized epidemics’ are acknowledged in as far as ‘vulnerability’ is concerned but this acknowledgement does not stretch to the lives of women living with HIV.
- Women living with HIV are invisible in contexts where the focus is on ‘key populations’ – with limited or no resources for specific programs for women.

As long as the realities of our lives continue to be marginalized and sometimes ignored, ICW will remain at the forefront of the struggle for the rights of all women and adolescent girls living with HIV.

# Section Five: Our Global Advocacy Agenda

ICW's global advocacy work reflects a strategic process to influence the policies and practices that affect the lives of women living with HIV. We have set a strong agenda for the next three years by strategically targeting areas that are underrepresented in the global response and streamlining our efforts to focus on issue areas where women living with HIV are disproportionately impacted by human rights abuses.

ICW is a truly global network and our global agenda is defined in partnership with our national, regional networks and ICW's grassroots leadership, to reflect the specific needs of women living with HIV in diverse contexts. Using this approach, we strive for global awareness and policy reform and remain responsive to pressing issues rising from the grassroots. To focus our efforts ICW has prioritized five key areas at the global level, where we believe our advocacy efforts can achieve the greatest impact:

## Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

ICW works to ensure the sexual and reproductive rights of women living with HIV and to enable women to make informed decisions on matters related to their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

ICW promotes the full realization of the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls living with HIV, including the right to have fulfilling sexual lives and to express our sexual identities, the right to make autonomous decisions about whether we will marry and whether we will have children, the right to freedom from all forms of violence, and the right to make those decisions with access to comprehensive information about our bodies, sexuality, and the full range of reproductive choices.

Women living with HIV must have access to appropriate and safe contraceptives, abortion and pregnancy support services for women living with HIV; the reduction of maternal mortality among women living with HIV must be prioritized. As a part of a full spectrum of care, ICW seek the increased availability of voluntary HIV testing, treatment, and counseling for all women and girls. ICW seeks an immediate and universal end to forced and coerced sterilization and forced and coerced abortion. ICW demands respect by healthcare workers, families, and community members for women's sexual and reproductive health and rights.

## Criminalization

ICW advocates for an end to the criminalization of HIV transmission and exposure and other forms of criminalization that oppress women living with HIV.

ICW seeks the repeal of laws that criminalize non-intentional HIV exposure or transmission, and an end to laws that single out women living with HIV or people living with HIV for prosecution or increased punishment solely related to their HIV status. In addition, criminal laws should only be used in extraordinary cases of intentional exposure or transmission. Overly broad use of criminal law results in unjust prosecutions and incarceration of people living with HIV. Criminal justice systems must ensure that similar risks and harms are treated alike.



ICW believes that criminalization is counterproductive. It discourages women living with HIV from accessing care, undermines the goals of counseling and the service provider relationship to their patients, increases the risk of violence against women living with HIV, and discourages people who know they have HIV from disclosing that fact to potential sexual partners and others. ICW advocates for key populations who face unjust criminalization based on their lifestyles and identities, including but not limited to lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women, women who use drugs, sex workers, and migrant and undocumented workers.

**Access to Treatment, Care and Support**

ICW aims to ensure comprehensive, quality and dignified health care for women living with HIV.

ICW promotes the universal right of all people living with HIV to access reliable, comprehensive, and sustainable care, treatment, and support. Women living with HIV must be able to make informed

decisions about their own treatment and care. Stigma, discrimination, and other barriers to treatment and care must be eliminated in order to ensure that women living with HIV and other marginalized populations can receive the care they need and are entitled to.

We demand an end to policies and practices that create barriers to accessing services for women, young women, adolescents and girls living with HIV. Importantly, we advocate the development of research and clinical trials that address the key overlooked aspects of living with HIV that uniquely impact women.

**Violence Against Women**

ICW demands an end to all forms of violence against women as defined and experienced by women living with HIV.

Institutional, systemic and intimate partner violence against women living with HIV/AIDS is endemic and largely underreported. Women living with HIV must be free from violence, coercion, stigma and discrimination. ICW demands an end to all forms

of violence against women, and recognition of how violence against women and other forms of gender based violence impact the health and lives of women living with HIV.

ICW demands freedom from violence for all marginalized and vulnerable populations within communities living with HIV, including, but not limited to: sex workers, members of the lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer communities, those who are internally and externally displaced, women living in conflict zones, women in prison, migrant women and women living with disabilities. Violence against women must be accounted for and addressed in all efforts to respond to HIV.

### Economic Justice

#### ICW seeks to ensure economic justice for women living with HIV.

ICW works to ensure that women living with HIV have adequate resources and support to provide for our basic economic and social human rights, including the right to sustainable livelihoods, housing, sanitation, and adequate food and water. ICW wants the recognition of the right of women living with HIV to full property, insurance, and inheritance rights, including the right to enter into and sign contracts in their own name and to access credit. Additionally, ICW promotes the right of women living with HIV to self-determination in terms of education and training.

ICW seeks increased recognition of the disparate impact poverty has on women living with HIV, and an end to discriminatory policies and requirements in employment, education, marriage, insurance, bank loans, travel and immigration.



# Section Six: Our Global Strategic Plan

## The Global Strategic Plan: Goals and Objective

ICW's Global Strategic Plan focuses on two key strategies designed to empower our work on the key issues impacting the lives of women living with HIV and achieve policy reform:

### Strategy 1: Movement Building

**To build a vibrant movement of powerful and informed women living with HIV who realize and claim our rights at a personal and societal level.**

We believe that the key to effective advocacy is a powerful movement of women living with HIV. Our Movement Building efforts for the next three years will focus on strengthening our key capacities to:

- Build a movement of informed and strong women living with HIV;
- Increase ICW membership and the active engagement of existing ICW members across regions and globally;
- Open up spaces for women to express our lived experiences and tell our stories;
- Implement vibrant and effective campaigns that reflect our issues;
- Put into place improved and dynamic communications and knowledge sharing strategies and information management;
- Increase involvement of young women;
- Develop active intergenerational mentorship and succession planning.

### Strategy 2: Advocacy

**To define and advance the agenda of women living with HIV and undertake strategic advocacy efforts to ensure the realization of our human rights.**

Our global advocacy efforts for the next three years will focus on targeted and strategic advocacy campaigns on the key issues identified in the advocacy agenda, and on strengthening and building critical capacities needed to make change. ICW's advocacy efforts will concentrate on sexual and reproductive health and rights, specifically forced and coerced sterilization of women living with HIV, maternal mortality, and the criminalization of HIV and key populations. ICW has powerful potential to amplify the voices of women living with HIV and to undertake strategic and collaborative advocacy efforts designed to:

- Advance the agenda of women living with HIV;
- Ensure the intentional and effective engagement of women living with HIV in decision-making processes;
- Secure the human rights of women living with HIV and their families;
- Hold governments and institutions accountable to their commitments at all levels.

## Strategy 1: Movement Building

To build a vibrant movement of powerful and informed women living with HIV who claim their rights at a personal and societal level.

AREA	GOAL	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIC AREA
<b>COMMUNICATIONS</b>	<b>Goal 1:</b> Raise the visibility of women living with HIV at a local, regional and global level.	To implement an effective external communications strategy through traditional, social and online media to increase the visibility of women living with HIV.	External Communication Strategy ICW Public Presence Public Relations Campaigns
		<b>MEMBERSHIP</b>	<b>Goal 2:</b> Increase ICW membership at a local, national and global level.
	To recruit and support new members.		Membership Drive
<b>COALITIONS</b>	<b>Goal 3:</b> Build alliances and solidarity with key partners and movements to advance the agenda of women living with HIV.	To strengthen key partnerships. To engage in joint campaigns and projects.	Strengthened Alliances Joint Campaigns
<b>ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>Goal 4:</b> Build the network capacity of ICW Global and it's regions to provide mutual support at all levels for improved efficiency and impact.	To sustain and increase human and financial resources to ICW's strategic priorities.	Resource Mobilization
		To improve internal coordination and communication linkages between local, regional and inter-regional for increased presence of ICW in local networks.	Internal Communications Strategy

## Strategy 2: Advocacy

To define and advance the agenda of women living with HIV and undertake strategic advocacy efforts to ensure the realization of our human rights.

AREA	GOAL	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIC AREA
POLICY REFORM AND ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS	<p><b>Goal 1:</b> Undertake strategic advocacy efforts to realize the human rights of women living with HIV.</p>	<p>To develop evidence-based strategic advocacy efforts that address the key issues outlined in ICW's Global Advocacy Agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights:</b> To ensure the human, sexual and reproductive rights of women living with HIV and enable women to make informed decisions on matters related to their sexual and reproductive health and rights.</li> <li>• <b>Access to Treatment, Care &amp; Support:</b> To ensure access to quality treatment, health and palliative care for women living with HIV.</li> <li>• <b>Violence Against Women:</b> To bring an end to all forms of violence against women as defined and experienced by women living with HIV.</li> <li>• <b>Criminalization:</b> To bring about an end to criminalization in all forms that oppress women living with HIV.</li> <li>• <b>Economic Justice:</b> To ensure economic justice for women living with HIV through advocacy and action.</li> </ul>	<p>Research &amp; Human Rights Violations Documentation</p> <hr/> <p>Policy Analysis &amp; ICW Position Development</p> <hr/> <p>Advocacy Strategy: Development &amp; Implementation</p> <hr/> <p>Campaigns:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sexual Reproductive Health &amp; Rights:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Ending Forced &amp; Coerced Sterilization</li> <li>b. Reducing Maternal Mortality</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Ending Criminalization</li> </ol>
	<p><b>Goal 2:</b> Prioritize and enhance ICW influence at key global decision making tables.</p>	<p>To ensure the intentional and effective engagement of women living with HIV in decision-making processes</p>	<p>Prioritization of Advocacy Spaces</p> <hr/> <p>Strengthening ICW Representation</p>
ADVOCACY CAPACITY BUILDING	<p><b>Goal 3:</b> Build ICW member and organizational capacity to undertake strategic advocacy efforts.</p>	<p>To increase ICW's ability to define and advance the agenda of women living with HIV.</p>	<p>Technical Assistance &amp; Training</p> <hr/> <p>Capacity Building &amp; Mentoring</p>

## Section Seven: The Way Forward

As advances in the global struggle to end the HIV epidemic give rise to discourse that would remove HIV from the center of the global development agenda, ICW knows that women living with HIV still have a long way to go before the totality of our lived experiences has been recognized and responses that reflect our needs, hopes, and desires have been implemented. Women living with HIV face inadequate and inappropriate treatment, care and support, blatant violations of our human rights, stigma and discrimination and often our needs are subordinated to the needs of our children.

Despite recent organizational restructuring, ICW and its affiliated regional networks have consistently delivered high quality advocacy, programming, expertise and direct support for women living with HIV around the world. Led by women living with HIV, ICW is uniquely positioned to enhance the effectiveness and relevance of HIV responses reaching inadequately served women. ICW continues to hold both global decision making systems and organizations working on HIV accountable to the needs of women living with HIV.

ICW has expanded our reach, adding new ICW regional networks in the Middle Eastern and North Africa (MENA) region, the Caribbean, and in Western and Central African regions. ICW has changed laws and policies, led participatory research on sexual health and reproductive rights, increased access to treatment, care, and support, and has built a political voice for women living with HIV. We have emerged stronger and more focused, and ICW remains globally recognized as the leading voice on issues impacting women living with HIV.

ICW is strong, and is poised to maximize the benefits of enhanced capacity to address the needs of women living with HIV in the post-2015 agenda.

**Together our voices  
are powerful.  
We are ICW!**



