

ICW'S YOUNG ADVOCATES  
SOCIAL MEDIA TEAM 2021



**#NowWeKnow**  
**Obstetric Violence Campaign Statement**  
**December 2021**

Obstetric violence is the disrespectful, abusive and humiliating treatment of women and girls during labour and childbirth. Obstetric violence is so common that many women all over the world may not be aware that what they have experienced is not right. We asked our peers, other women including young women in our community living with HIV about their experiences of childbirth and they said:

They degraded me.  
They told me I should not have children.  
Nurses wouldn't treat me.  
Doctors made me clean up after the birth.

Sveta: I birthed alone on the floor.  
I was left too long.  
They were hitting me.  
I blame the hospital for letting my baby suffer.

Doctors sterilized me after the birth.  
I have held this secret for so long.  
I thought that was normal.

As we see obstetric violence can look different but at the end of the day, it is all violence.

We know this mistreatment exists but we never knew it had a name. We just knew that we were scared to go to the doctor and get follow up treatment. We knew it made us feel shame and internalize the stigma. The fear of experiencing obstetric violence creates psychological

distance between us and healthcare workers making women living with HIV scared to go to formal health care systems.

Because obstetric violence by health care professionals amplifies the chances of complications in labour and postpartum. We see higher rates of infant and maternal death in women who are living with HIV and now we know why.

We claim autonomy over our bodies and the right to choose if, when and how we have children. We demand quality and accessible SRHR services and to be told the most up to date information to make informed decisions by all healthcare providers.

We demand not be forced to make decisions in regards to our reproductive health. We want an immediate end to all forced and coerced sterilizations and forced abortions of women living with HIV, women with disabilities, women who use drugs, Indigenous women, lesbian, bisexual and queer women and incarcerated women.

We want all women living with HIV and women from key populations to have full access to all Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights and services including comprehensive sexuality education free of stigma and discrimination We want to talk about intersectionality and we demand more support for women from key populations.

We want to be treated with respect and compassion by all health care providers. We want women living with HIV to be allowed the choice to breastfeed their children if they choose to and to be safe from criminalization and other punishments.

We want greater support from governments and partners to document our experiences and action in defining and measuring the disrespect and abuse in public and health facilities and to understand its impacts on women and girls experiences and choices.

We want obstetric violence in all its forms to stop and for healthcare providers to be accountable for the physical, and psychological harm they have inflicted on us. We want free psychological support for women and girls living with HIV and have faced obstetric violence and to see peer support groups to talk about this issue.

Everyone: Now we know our rights, we want all our sisters to know their rights.

If you have experienced obstetric violence contact us. You are not alone visit [www.wlhiv.org](http://www.wlhiv.org) or email [info@wlhiv.org](mailto:info@wlhiv.org)

Watch our video here: