



# AMShEr @ 19TH International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA)

29 Nov – 11 Dec 2017 Abidjan • Cote d'Ivoire

**No End to AIDS without Inclusion of All**

## ICASA Key Populations Pre-Conference CONCEPT NOTE

### Onto the African Map: Youth Key Populations and HIV

December 2 - 3, 2017. Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire

#### Background

The 19th edition of the International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA) focuses on the theme 'AFRICA: Ending AIDS -- delivering differently'. The theme of the Conference engages the whole continent and all stakeholders in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) framework, where sustainability of the response in reaching 90, 90, 90 of UNAIDS will not be possible if human rights are not key priority for a new vision of leadership in the context of strengthening the application of science based evidence. Further, as the theme is focused on delivering differently, it is of utmost importance to identify populations that have been left behind and fashion innovative ways to reach them in a culturally sanctioned approach that takes into cognizance African contexts and home tailored interventions. The Conference will be an opportunity to renew this global commitment by drawing the world's attention to the fact that the legacy is now under threat as a result of the global economic downturn. Hence, the international community, and all Africans, should join efforts in committing to achieving an AIDS-free Africa "This future for Africa that we envisage can't be a reality if we don't start addressing HIV amongst our young people".

Against this background, African Men for Sexual and Health Rights (AMShEr), African Sex Workers Alliance (ASWA), Gender Dynamix/ Southern Africa Trans Forum, the Coalition of African Lesbians (CAL) and other networks of key populations (KP) will host a two-day pre-conference prior to ICASA 2017, focusing on youth. A spotlight on youth is aligned with the African Union's designation of 2017 as a year focused on the youth, under the theme: "Harnessing the demographic dividend through an investment in youth". This investment is however threatened by HIV/AIDS. Young people (10 to 24 years) and adolescents (10 to 19 years), particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, continue to be disproportionately affected by HIV. The Pre-Conference will focus on a particular segment of the broad category "youth", namely, youth key populations (YKPs), designating those who are most at risk of HIV infection. These groups include young gay men and other young men who have sex with men (MSM), transgender (TG) youth, young sex workers (SW), young persons who inject drugs (PWID) and youth living with HIV (YLHIV) in Africa. The Pre-Conference will aim to facilitate an exchange of views, critical reflection and identification of



priority health and human rights-related issues for youth falling in these different YKPs.

Up to 10,000 delegates, including the world's leading scientists, policymakers, activists, People Living with HIV (PLWHIV) and government leaders, are expected to participate in the biggest AIDS conference in Africa

## Issues:

By focusing on YKPs, two overlapping groups, both of whom are particularly vulnerable to HIV infection, are brought under one umbrella: key populations and youth.

KPs continue to be most affected by HIV/AIDS. In every region of the world, the HIV prevalence is significantly higher among these groups compared to prevalence among the general population. Despite this elevated risk, KPs continue to bear the brunt of exclusion from national HIV policies, national sanctioned interventions and minimum packages of HIV services. Also, globally and on the African continent, there is a paucity of research on KPs, resulting in a dearth of epidemiologic and service delivery data in respect of SW, MSM, PWID and TG persons.

Even more dire is the ticking time bomb that is the youth on the African continent. Adolescents and youths are at a difficult and important growth phase in their life, involving an intersection of developmental, psychological, social and structural issues that puts them at significant risk of HIV<sup>1</sup>. While decreasing among other population groups, HIV deaths are increasing among adolescents in Africa, where it is the leading cause of deaths and second leading cause of death among adolescents globally<sup>2</sup>. Adolescents are thus, in their own right, a key population.

In recognition of this fact, in 2015, a new global strategy, "**The ALL IN! to End Adolescent AIDS**", was launched, aimed at ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030<sup>3</sup>. To achieve this, it is critical to accelerate efforts to address the epidemic among adolescents. **ALL IN to #EndAdolescentAIDS** is a platform for action and collaboration to inspire a social movement to drive better results with and for adolescents (aged 10-19 years) through critical changes in programmes and policy. It aims to unite actors across sectors to accelerate reductions in AIDS-related deaths by 65% and new HIV infections among adolescents by 75% by 2020, and thus set the global AIDS movement on track to end the AIDS epidemic among adolescents by 2030. **All-IN**, serves as a platform to strengthen partnership across sectors and foster meaningful involvement of adolescents in all aspects of programming and advocacy for adolescents, while providing an opportunity to support countries to improve data collection, analysis and utilization for programme planning, M&E.

Most vulnerable among young people (including adolescents) are YKPs, namely, young gay men and young MSM, young PWID, young SW, young persons in conflict with the law or young persons who manifest a combination of these different marginal identities.

Focusing on YKPs encourages long overdue conversations. The conversations on sexual and gender diversity, drug use, sex work among youth and youths in detention, who are in conflict with the law- must be had in a frank and robust space that puts the well-being of young people at the centre. Considering the adolescent deaths in Africa as a result of HIV/AIDS, governments must start addressing the vulnerabilities of YKP. The solutions and interventions to address their issues must be grounded in the young key populations' socio-ecological context. This holds true, because this is where all the factors that put them at a significant risk of HIV exist and intersect.

If we believe that the youth are the future of our continent we should ensure that the future is a more livable experience for them.

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1 Bekker, L.G., Johnson, L., Wallace, M. and Hosek, S., 2015. Building our youth for the future. *Journal of the International AIDS Society*, 18(2Suppl 1)

2 Schunter, B.T., Cheng, W.S., Kendall, M. and Marais, H., 2014. Lessons learned from a review of interventions for adolescent and young key populations in Asia Pacific and opportunities for programming. *J AIDS Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes*, 66, pp.S186-S192.

3 UNICEF, 2014. Turning the tide against AIDS will require more concentrated focus on adolescents and young people. Retrieved from [data.unicef.org/hiv-aids/adolescents-young-people](http://data.unicef.org/hiv-aids/adolescents-young-people).



Against this background, this year's Pre-Conference theme is:

## Onto the Map: Youth Key Populations and HIV.

### Aims:

#### The YKP Pre-Conference aims to:

- stimulate a broader conversation, located in the African context, about youth queer sexuality and identity, youth sex work and injecting drug use;
- develop priority issues from the KP networks with reference to YKPs and their sexual reproductive health and rights;
- explore avenues and spaces to introduce the conversation on YKPs and HIV;
- identify appropriate interventions to better protect YKPs from HIV infection, taking into cognisance the cultural context of Africa;
- provide a platform for the visibility of YKPs' participation in and contribution to the HIV response,
- facilitate and encourage mutually enriching learning exchanges between networks, communities and researchers, policymakers, donors, and other stakeholders.

### Objectives:

- To raise awareness and deepen understanding about the particular vulnerabilities to HIV infection of YKPs;
- To take stock of and critically review the extent to and ways in which African governments have included YKPs in HIV prevention programmes;
- Understand and reflect on opportunities for interventions to address the attitudes and knowledge of YKP on HIV vulnerabilities, prevention services and treatment services for them, and on ways in which to better manage this, taking into cognisance existing law and policy frameworks.

### Expected outcomes:

- Increased awareness of sexual and gender diverse African youth and the presence of these diverse YKPs on the continent.
- Increased awareness of health and human rights-related issues affecting YKPs in Africa.
- Identification of priority needs of YKPs to address the health and human rights needs such as safety and security of YKP in Africa.
- Identifying culturally sensitive programme interventions for YKP and opportunities for these interventions.
- Increased knowledge and understanding of the latest biomedical scientific evidence, innovations and guidelines for addressing the health and human rights needs of YKP.
- Enhanced YKP leadership and advocacy.
- Commitments to further advance YKP in programming, advocacy for domestic resource mobilization



## Participants:

It is envisioned that between 180 and 200 participants will attend the YKP Pre-Conference. This group will include YKPs representatives and other health and human rights advocates, service providers, researchers, policymakers, donors, and individuals and entities working to address the needs of YKPs.

**Preferences will be given to participants from the African continent.**

## Format:

**The KP Pre-conference will be a two-day event that will provide space for:**

Plenary sessions, which will serve to address emerging and crosscutting issues that affect all KP groups, but with a special focus on YKPs. A detailed agenda may include: HIV in the post-2017 era, criminalization and its effect on YKPs; HTC and access to treatment and prevention of YKPs, country ownership including in domestic resource mobilization; the feasibility and acceptability of new technologies, including HIV rapid self-testing devices, for YKPs; comprehensive sexuality education and challenges posed to such education in respect of YKPs

- KP leadership in local processes, implementation of programmes targeting KP including Global Fund and Pefar-funded programmes.
- KP safety and security in Africa, best practice in restricted contexts.
- The formats used will be moderated panel discussions and plenary addresses.
- Breakout sessions will be used to learn from latest scientific evidence, innovations, guidelines and KP programmes; and to address issues that are more specific to each of the KP groups: anal health, mental health, hormonal therapy, gender affirming surgery, opioid substitution therapy, needle exchange programmes and new prevention technologies and tools, WHO guidelines and implementation tools, etc.

A “meet-the-locals” cocktail event will be held on the evening of the first day to facilitate networking between national and regional YKP groups and networks from across Africa and with international and donor organisations, and increase dialogue on YKP issues in Côte d’Ivoire.

## Organising Committee:

- Representatives of KP regional networks especially MSM, TG, SW, PWID and PLHIV networks that include youth in their focus and operations.
- Representatives of international organizations working to address health and human rights needs of YKP and willing to support the YKP Pre-Conference.
- Representative of research institutions with YKP-related scope of work.



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