



Unite to End TB! Women living with HIV call for an end to the TB epidemic through improving health service delivery and accountability

March 24, 2016

Find treat and cure all women living with HIV that need TB Treatment. Care and save over 160,000 women dying of TB every year

As The International Community of Women Living with HIV Eastern Africa (ICWEA) commemorates the World TB Day, we recognise that Tuberculosis (TB) is the leading killer of people living with HIV in Sub-Saharan Africa. The World Health Organization (Who) estimates that at least one-third of the nearly 36 million people living with HIV/AIDS are also infected with TB.

But the disease kills more women each year than any other infection especially because there are more women living with HIV. Globally, women make up 52% of all adults living with HIV and 58% in sub-Saharan Africa. TB is particularly disastrous for women living with HIV who have poor access to health services, making them particularly vulnerable to the outcomes linked to undetected or late detection of the TB disease. The 2014, Global WHO report indicates that TB killed 1.5 million people; 1.1 million HIV-negative and 0.4 million HIV-positive. The toll comprised 890,000 men, 480, 000 women and 140,000 children.

Women face acute risks of TB/HIV co-infection and subsequent TB disease, it remains among the top killer diseases of women of reproductive age.

The three East African countries (Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya) remain among the 22 TB high burden countries in the world. Case detection and treatment success are still low in East Africa.

This predicament waters down efforts to control this very highly infectious disease which mostly affects women who care for the sick both in health facilities, at homes and communities.

Pregnant women living with HIV and with active TB face far higher risks of maternal mortality than HIV negative women. Accordingly, universal access to TB prevention, diagnosis, and treatment services is critical for women living with HIV.

Despite the importance of early diagnosis and treatment of TB for successful outcomes, few mechanisms are in place to target women of reproductive age with TB services, especially for women living with HIV.

Too often, these women face the lethal combination of living with HIV and having poor access to health services, making them particularly vulnerable to poorer outcomes linked to undetected or late detected TB disease.

International Community of Women Living with HIV Eastern Africa (ICWEA)
www.icwea.org

Plot 1106, Ssenge- Kawanda Rd, Off Kayunga Road, Kampala-Hoima Rd, P.O. Box 32252, Kampala,
Tel: (+256) 414 531 913 - Fax: (+256) 414 533 341



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Many women living with HIV do not get the medical care and treatment they deserve while some die undiagnosed. There is limited information in communities. TB has been left to the laboratories and health facilities and yet it is a big public health problem.

Women living with HIV often miss health promotion programmes and remain unaware of TB symptoms due to the gender-related barriers that impact women's access to TB information and services.

Where women do not control family resources, they often delay seeking medical care as they many times have to seek permission and money to go to a clinic, fearful of being seen going to a TB clinic, because of the stigma.

TB is treatable and curable, let us commit to diagnosing TB, effectively treat it and end the TB epidemic in our community. Community engagement and empowerment in implementation, is critical if TB is to be eradicated. Ending TB will only be achieved with greater collaboration within and across governments, let us all work together.

Our call

We call upon world leaders, policy makers and implementers to meaningfully involve women living with HIV and promote accountability to end the TB epidemic.

ICWEA therefore recommends that TB treatment and care for Women living with HIV be elevated as a key women's health issue. TB screening, prevention and treatment should be made part of HIV, reproductive health and maternal and child health services for women living with HIV.

We call upon our government, all partners and stake holder in TB response to urgently develop and implement clear plans for sustainable TB financing and scale up beyond current donor funding continue engagement with women living with HIV.

Women Living with HIV unite to improve health service delivery and accountability



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