



International Community of Women Living with HIV & AIDS Eastern Africa

Kampala, 26th September 2016

ICWEA STATEMENT ON WORLD CONTRACEPTION DAY, 2016 (WCD)

Urgent call for expansion of Contraceptive Method Mix amidst the unanswered question of whether Depo-Provera increases HIV acquisition.

Today, The International Community of Women Living with HIV Eastern Africa (ICWEA) joins Reproductive Health Leaders and Partners from all over the World in commemorating the World Contraception Day, 2016 (WCD). ICWEA reiterates a call to World Health Organisation (WHO), Pharmaceutical Companies, Private Foundations, Policy Makers, Governments, and FP 2020 Partner Countries and other partners at all levels to respond to the unmet Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights and family planning needs of women and girls in all our diversity.

Since the release of the findings of Heffron et al Study in October 2011, suggesting the possibility that progestogen-only contraceptives may increase risk of acquiring HIV, ICWEA in collaboration with AVAC, the HIV prevention advocates, reproductive health service providers, Women Advocates and Women living with HIV from all over the world have been following the debates & discussions on this critical issue at all levels.

We remain concerned that since 2012, WHO has not revised the recommendation of no restrictions on the use of any hormonal contraceptive method for women at high risk of HIV or those living with HIV due to the inconclusive nature of the body of evidence. Our concern gets even more compounded by the new review carried out by *Chelsea Polis et al, 2016*, of evidence on Hormonal Contraceptive methods especially the intramuscular depot medroxyprogesterone acetate (DMPA), an injectable contraceptive most commonly sold as Depo-Provera, which heightens existing concerns about a possible increase in risk of HIV acquisition in women who use the method.

In spite of this uncertainty, most sub-Saharan African women aren't receiving more options nor more information, yet young women and girls have a high lifetime risk of acquiring HIV, hormonal contraceptives (especially progestogen-only injectable methods) constitute a large proportion of all modern methods used and maternal mortality rates remain high.

ICWEA urgently Calls for:

- Immediate provision of technical and financial support for Sub Saharan African countries to immediately expand method mix to enable women have options and choices;
- Full support for the ECHO trial which is very essential for answering the uncertainty around use of Depo-Provera and its relationship to HIV transmission and acquisition;
- Enabling female adolescents and women to choose the contraceptive method of their choice is put at the center of wider RMNCH interventions;

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- Commitment to enforce the strategies that support female adolescents and women's access to a full range of contraceptive methods;
- Governments to take clear public leadership on the need to act on the persistent doubt about the link between specific hormonal contraceptives especially DMPA which is commonly used in Sub Saharan Africa and HIV risk yet there is high maternal mortality
- WHO' Department of Reproductive Health and Research to extend invitations to have more voices of women from the Sub Saharan Africa during the forth-coming Expert Review Group meeting for Hormonal contraception and high risk of HIV infection acquisition: A WHO expert review of the current evidence. Having one or two representatives of the advocates is tokenistic and will not be representative enough.

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