



Independent observer  
of the Global Fund

## Undue influence, Harm reduction, Supreme Audit Institutions, Elderly living with HIV, Pandemics

The International AIDS conference in Munich had interesting conversations happening on the sidelines, which reflected the challenges that remain in addressing HIV. Put People First, U equals U was the message from the International AIDS conference in Munich in July 2024. Ben Phillips, UNAIDS, speaking to Karl Schmid, at the AIDS 2024 Live Show put the need for this message bluntly: “We’re not just leaving people behind. In fact, we’re pushing them outside. When you have hateful laws that tell people we will hunt you down for being gay, we will crush your life for having a drug dependence, we will stigmatize and shame you because you’re in sex work and then you say to people, oh, can you come into the clinic, I mean who wants to do that? And so, we won’t have prevention until we have inclusion.”

A focus of the conference was on adolescents and the young population. It is because the statistics are worrisome: As per an international workshop on Pediatrics & HIV 2024 held prior to the main conference, “HIV remains one of the leading causes of death among adolescents living in Africa and among the top 10 causes of death in adolescents globally.” Moreover, “with more than 1.3 million pregnant women globally receiving ART, there are increasing concerns about the long-term impact of in utero and postnatal exposures to medications for those children who escape HIV. Currently, the global population of HIV-exposed uninfected children and adolescents is estimated at 14.8 million, including over 8 million with in-utero ARV exposure.”

The inequity faced by young persons was brought to the fore by Joyce Ouma, an advocate for young

people with HIV, Senior Programme Officer, The Global Network of Young People Living with HIV (Y+ Global). In conversation with Karl Schmid, at the AIDS 2024 Live Show she said, “Others got visas in a day or two days [to attend the Munich conference] because they are older. But young women who at a record 60 days still didn’t get their visas because one, they were either flight risks, or two, they didn’t have children or didn’t own property, so that’s the depth of inequality we’re talking about. Finally, partners, scientists, everyone always need a reminder of why ethical and meaningful engagement of young people is very important.”

There was great joy at the discovery of a new twice-yearly injectable of the drug lenacapavir that proved more effective in HIV prevention treatment, prevention (pre-exposure prophylaxis). Speaking to Aldrin Sampear, Newz Room, Afrika, Prof Linda Gail-Bekker, Desmond Tutu HIV Centre was hopeful that since young people struggle to take the prescribed pill daily for prevention, this new treatment will really help. But she agreed with Sampear that caution was needed in the messaging: “We have to still advise people that this protects only against HIV and if there is a risk of STI, condoms are our go-to. And contraceptives so as to prevent pregnancy.” Dr Monica Gandhi, MD, MPH, UCSF, in conversation with Schmid expressed skepticism about the rollout of the new treatment. “What about the next steps? There was a long-acting agent called Kaletra that was released in 2021 and the rollout has been dismal. It is nowhere in low- and middle- income countries. It’s just starting to get there. And the worry is it took so long, so how long is this going to take? Lot of discussions about medicines patent pool, voluntary licensing. How are you going to get it where it’s needed?”

At the conference, a satellite session on the [Undue influence: The outsized role of U.S. policy in global HIV and sexual reproductive health and rights](#) was organized by amfAR. We bring a guest article from Jennifer Sherwood, amfAR who was one of the speakers, on her presentation regarding the specific ways anti-abortion policies, namely the Mexico City Policy, impacts HIV programming.

Catherine Cook, Sustainable Financing Lead, Harm Reduction International in another guest article presents its new report entitled [The Cost of Complacency: A Harm Reduction Funding Crisis](#). The article has a particular focus on the Global Fund, the largest donor for harm reduction in low – and middle – income countries. Thank you, Catherine for writing on the report for us!

In a continuing series on the Global Fund Forum on public financial management, we bring to you a panel discussion featuring representatives from Rwanda, Jamaica, Lesotho and India to share their experiences on [Opportunities and challenges of Supreme Audit Institutions in driving accountability and sustainability in health](#) written by Samuel Muniu,

Also in a continuing series on the Regional meeting on “Advancing community, rights and gender for an equitable response to tuberculosis in Francophone Africa” held in Yaoundé, Cameroon in June 2024, we have an [exclusive interview with Bertrand Kampoer](#), regional coordinator of DRAF-TB (Dynamics of the Francophone African Response to TB (DRAF-TB)).

We also have articles related to L'Initiative – on the [VIHeillir project: An initiative for healthy ageing with HIV](#), which is a programme it funds in Cameroon and Senegal; as well as an [Overview of L'Initiative's 2023 activity report](#). All the above three are written by Christian Djoko and translated by Amida Kariburyo from our French counterpart Observateur du Fonds Mondial (OFM).

And we conclude, with an article that covers insights from a COPPER workshop on [Pandemic Preparedness and Response](#) written by George Njenga Kiai even as Mpox is declared a global emergency by WHO.

So, that's it from our August newsletter and before signing off, a shoutout to the [RISE Study Group on Country Coordinating Mechanisms](#), on winning the Robert Carr Research Award 2024, which was announced at the International AIDS conference in Munich! Congrats! And we're thrilled to have featured the RISE study in our newsletter courtesy Serge Douomong Yotta, Alana Sharp and Jennifer Sherwood, all of whom were part of the winning team! Thank you for your contributions as guest columnists!

And any thoughts about which aspect in the global health initiative sector you'd like to see covered in our newsletter are always welcome and we'd really appreciate suggestions on who can pen an article on it! Anyone who wishes to voluntarily contribute as a guest columnist and provide an incisive analysis or first-person account of what is happening at micro – or macro – levels in the field of global health interventions is also welcome. Any feedback and suggestions in French, Spanish, English can be sent to Ida Hakizinka [ida.hakizinka@aidspan.org](mailto:ida.hakizinka@aidspan.org) and/or in English to [madhuri@aidspan.org](mailto:madhuri@aidspan.org)

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