

Women **WON'T** wait

End HIV & Violence Against Women. **NOW.**

Addressing Violence against Women in HIV Responses in Eight Countries Worldwide

56th Session of the CSW
1 March 2012, 12:30–2:00 PM
Salvation Army Building – New York City

In the framework of the **56th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) of the United Nations**, the international campaign "**Women Won't Wait. End HIV & Violence against Women NOW**" and the **Foundation for Studies and Research on Women –FEIM-** as campaign co-coordinator, organized the side event: "**Addressing Violence against Women in HIV Responses in Eight Countries Worldwide**". The event aimed to share lessons learned and proposals for incorporating the issue of violence against women (VAW) in HIV responses in different countries around the world. Participants included the two Co-coordinators of the campaign as well as three keynote speakers, among others, all of whom brought diverse experiences and perspectives to the discussion.

The session was moderated by **Dinah Musindarwezo, Co-coordinator of the Women Won't Wait Campaign and Executive Director of FEMNET**. She opened the session and introduced the speakers on the panel. Afterwards, **Mabel Bianco, Co-coordinator of the Women Won't Wait Campaign, President of FEIM and Coordinator of the International AIDS Women's Caucus –IAWC-**, explained the campaign, its creation and development since 2006, and the project it is currently implementing, which promotes joint monitoring and advocacy activities for the incorporation of the issue of VAW in national HIV/AIDS responses in eight countries worldwide: Democratic Republic of Congo, Brazil, Haiti, Indonesia, Peru, South Africa, Ukraine and Vietnam, based on the UNAIDS Agenda for Accelerated Country Action for Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV.



As Head of **Gender and AIDS Team at UNAIDS & Director of the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS (GCWA)**, **Jantine Jacobi** gave an overview of statistics and evidence on the established association between the twin pandemics: gender-based violence and HIV, in countries from all regions of the world based on studies by GCWA, UNAIDS and the evaluation of the implementation of the UNAIDS "Agenda for Accelerated Country Action for Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV" (Agenda for Women and Girls). She addressed actions that have been taken and outcomes, highlighting the importance of the UNAIDS Agenda for Women and Girls and the UNAIDS Strategy 2011-2015: "Getting to Zero", as well as other recent UN and GCWA documents, as tools for promoting gender transformative HIV responses and zero tolerance of violence against women and girls in different national contexts and as necessary steps for strengthening HIV prevention, care, treatment and support (see full presentation at: http://womenwontwait.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&Itemid=65&qid=44&orderby=dmdate_published).

Representatives of the All-Ukrainian Network of PLWH, Ella Lamakh and Olga Gvozdetska presented about their network's participation in the Women Won't Wait project developed at the national level in Ukraine in 2011, including findings, experiences and future plans, based on their monitoring and advocacy activities for the incorporation of violence against women in the national HIV response. They found that there are statistics showing increased feminization of the epidemic and intensification of sexual transmission of HIV to intimate partners, but that there is a lack of reliable data about violence against women, which represents an obstacle to building public recognition of the link between VAW and HIV. Therefore, VAW was not reviewed as one of the key factors that increased HIV incidence at national level, nor is there any current legislation promoting protection from violence against women. Despite these challenges, in 2011 networks of women, including women living with HIV and victims of violence, and women's rights groups began to exist and are ready to work together to provide information and services and advocate authorities for the integration of VAW in the context of HIV (see full presentation at: http://womenwontwait.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&Itemid=65&qid=44&orderby=dmdate_published).

Engwase Mwale, Executive Director of the Non-Governmental Organizations Coordinating Council (NGOCC), an umbrella council for women's organization's in Zambia, lead organization on gender-based violence and **partner of YWCA Zambia**, presented about the situation of the intersection of VAW and HIV in Zambia and the integration of VAW in the HIV strategy in Zambia. She



highlighted findings from CSO studies in Zambia showing evidence of women's and girls' increased vulnerability to HIV due to all forms of gender-based violence and harmful gender norms and practices. Although there were advances in gender-based violence legislation, it is not fully enforced nor is it integrated with HIV-AIDS interventions or the country's National AIDS Strategic Framework. She called for these gaps to be addressed and for strengthening advocacy for including the issue of gender-based violence, especially awareness raising and support for victims, in a more holistic approach to HIV/AIDS (see full presentation at: http://womenwontwait.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&Itemid=65&qid=44&orderby=dmdate_published).

Considering that Sally-Jean Shackleton, Director of the Sex Workers Education and Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT) and Women Won't Wait project participant in South Africa, was not able to attend, the panel coordinators invited **Joanna Kehler**, fellow project participant from South Africa and **National Executive Director of the AIDS Legal Network**, to present a brief panorama of the situation in South Africa, especially related to discrimination against some women and difficulties in accessing legal advice.

The presentations were followed by an opportunity for discussion, in which the approximately fifty audience members exchanged with the speakers and other participants about their experiences working with the intersection of VAW and HIV, priorities they have identified in their countries and ways to advance HIV responses that address violence against women and girls. The question about how to develop effective interventions was an excellent opportunity for speakers and some of those attending the panel to share experiences about effective responses to the epidemic.