

WOMEN'S ORGANISATION NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS&ADVOCACY (WONETHA)



**Report On Wonetha Activities Marking World Aids Day 2010  
Under Global Theme: 'Universal Access And Human Rights'**





*Sex Workers have lust ..... For their Rights*

Kampala December 5, 2010

**Introduction:**

The World Aids day, marked by countries around the World is an opportunity for governments, civil society, individuals, communities and all sectors across the board to reflect on activities in the past 12 months to scaling down prevalence rates in their population. In Uganda, 6.4% of the 33 million people are HIV/AIDS positive. This is a sharp decline from about 30% in the 1980s, when the pandemic first struck the country. The theme for this year's World Aids Day was: 'Universal Access and Human Rights'. However, Uganda chose to mark the day under the theme to highlight the need for Paediatric HIV/AIDS interventions under the theme *"I have a duty to protect every child from HIV/AIDS..... Do you?"* The theme reflected Uganda's national priority in addressing the challenges of the pandemic in the country, with an estimated 25,000 children born each year HIV positive.



*Dr Ezaati, Uganda's Director General of Health Services shelters under Wonetha advocacy umbrella from the sun during WAD2010*

## **WONETHA activities to mark WAD 2010-12-02**

WONETHA has a major stake in scaling back infection rates in Uganda. Although the national theme focused primarily at Paediatric HIV/AIDS, there is an urgent need to address the needs of vulnerable groups including sex workers to access to health through the Right to Health. This right is expressed, among other ways in access to care, treatment, Support of HIV/AIDS for the positive sexworkers, but also Sexually Transmitted Infections and management in the public health framework in the country. This is crucial to be done, without discrimination of self for who they are. This year, following the cancellation of a sex workers conference on November 18,2010 to sensitize on leadership and health, among which is HIV/AIDS, WONETHA felt the need to come out and make a public Open appeal for Solidarity to the Civil Society Organisations addressing HIV/AIDS. This was in partnership with other minority organisations including UHSPA, Frank and Candy, HRAPF, Rainbow Health Foundation. The appeal is annexed at the Back.



**Exhibition Table for WONETHA on 1<sup>st</sup> Dec 2010**



*Kikonyogo (left), Madina wonetha Chairperson (next to L), Daisy and Macklean on their exhibiting table and ready to sensitize the community on the role of sexworkers in the fight of HIV through the demonstration of the use of female and condom at the organization stall during WAD 1<sup>st</sup> Dec 2010*



*Daisy WONETHA Staff (L) demonstrate the use of female condom at the organization stall during WAD 2010*



*Daisy WONETHA Staff (L) demonstrate the use of female condom at the organization stall during WAD 2010*



*Below Ms Macklean Kyomya shares on the benefits of empowerment and leadership building by African Women Leadership Institute (AWLI) with fellow activists*



Participation in the March, WONETHA staff participated in 6kilometre long march through the streets of Kampala, along with other activities. The message from WONETHA was on equal rights. “Sex Workers have a Lust... for their Rights.” Another message, “ Life has no Spare Parts, Don’t Risk Sex without a Condom”, “ Each Individuals Life Matters, Sex Workers Rights are Human Rights.” The march ended at Kitebi Primary School, where WONETHA, with Partners, UHSPA-Uganda had a stall for displaying lobbyist messages, demonstrations on condom use and general human rights awareness education to the public.

## WONETHA'S WAD 2010 Stall.



The stall for the day attracted a large number of people, including security officers from the army and police, church leaders, academicians, politicians, social workers, scientists, school children, married couples, teachers, among other cadres. We distributed condoms free of charge courtesy of Uganda Cares and MARPI networks. WONETHA staff displayed rights posters, and demonstrated how to use the femidom and male condoms. Most of the people were supportive of sexworkers having rights. For some, it was the first time, they came across sexworkers activists who are so bold of who they are. Some felt thrilled with learning on how to use a condom- especially the female condom. But many people do not use condoms consistently. Some said they can not have sex in the light or during day, making condom use risky, and hence the need for more government and civil society training on condom use in the country.

### **Lessons learnt from WONETHA Participation in this World Aids Day 2010**

WONETHA's participation in this year's WAD created new opportunities and frontiers to advance Sex Workers rights. There was warm reception, unlike in the past.

There is a need for WONETHA to continue mobilizing around the Right to Health to advance Sex Workers Rights in general.

The public feels there is a genuine need for Sex Workers rights in Uganda and are supportive.

We need to build more synergies and partnership with other activists from People Living with HIV/AIDS, sexual minorities organisations and the media.

We need to prepare in advance for world aids day 2011, and mobilize resources for the same in advance.

There is a need to print more materials advocating for sexworkers rights. The materials we had on the stall got finished. Many people were still yearning and we had to borrow from Uganda Cares and Most At Risk Populations Initiatives (MARPI).

### **Challenges**

We need more resources and better preparation for WAD 2011 and World Human Rights Day.

We need WONETHA Video Camera to be able to document much better our activities,

There is a need for identifying more national and international celebrations, especially around health related matters, so as to use the timing to send a strong message on sex workers rights.

### **Annex1: Wonetha and partners Appeal on WAD2010**

*Open Urgent Appeal to HIV/AIDS Civil Society in Uganda to scale-back MSM HIV bridging population Infection rates on occasion of Marking World Aids Day 2010*

Kampala, November 30,2010....We, the leaders of Minority Rights Organizations in Uganda with Special interest in reversing HIV/AIDS prevalence rates among our constituencies;

Aware of the important contribution of Ugandan Civil Society to best practices in Global management of HIV/AIDS,

In full Solidarity with you our sisters and brothers in CSO in the genuine struggles ahead to better management of HIV/AIDS Uganda,

Cognizant of the incredible contribution to past and ongoing research involving sex workers and LGBTI community in other countries to the development and advancement of knowledge on Anti Retroviral Therapy, prevention, care and diagnostic regimes, currently benefiting Ugandans,

Underscoring the important lobbying you do for Universal access to Anti retroviral Therapy, better Pediatrics HIV/AIDS Management, putting an end to Stock Outs of Medicines in Health facilities, engendering health, Safe motherhood and Reproductive Health and Rights.

Recognizing the diversity in constituencies we advocate for,

Aware of the sensitivities associated with some of the constituencies we advocate for,

Recognising the bravery of incredible activists including Noerine and Christopher Kaleeba; Philly Bongoley Lutaaya to ending stigma, rejection, discrimination, and condemnation based on one's sero status



DO HEREBY MAKE THIS PASSIONATE AND URGENT CALL OF ACTION TO YOU as we mark the World Aids Day 2010 under the international theme: 'Universal Access and Human Rights' to make efforts and interventions in addressing Uganda's bridging population of HIV positive sexual minorities and Commercial Sex Workers, in an effort to scale down, the stagnant HIV/AIDS prevalence in Uganda.

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The 6.4% (UAC) national HIV prevalence is not acceptable, especially given that policy makers in our country are playing the Ostrich game with this bridging population. No policy interventions, worth writing home about are in place to create sensitisation, awareness, and information to sexual minorities especially homosexuals on HIV/AIDS management. Yet, Men who have sex with Men, out of social pressure get girlfriends or wives to publicly display their masculinity. MSM in Uganda have no access to information, sensitisation or awareness from public health framework on prevention, care or treatment that addresses their specific challenges. All HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness messages target heterosexuals, creating the wrong and dangerous assumption that only unprotected heterosexual can result into infections.

*We, therefore, specifically call on you fellow activists to:*

Show solidarity when efforts to sensitise our constituencies on HIV/AIDS are unlawfully interrupted by Policy Makers like the recent cancellation of a sex workers conference at Serena Victoria Hotel. HIV/AIDS awareness and protection was on the agenda of that meeting cancelled by Ethics Minister Dr James Nsaba Buturo. Ask government to include LGBTI under MARPS in access to health care in the Health Sector Strategic Investment Plan III and in the HIV Health Sector HIV Strategic Plan II. Demand for government commitment to providing sexual minorities access to health care, awareness, information and sensitization as a public health obligation in the HIV/AIDS Control Bill 2010, currently before Parliament. Remind government to include LGBTI access to Health care in research activities undertaken with Public Resources. Implement recommendations in the National Policy Guidelines and Service Standards for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights to enable LGBTI access to health care without discrimination, Call for the total withdraw of the Anti Homosexuality Bill 2009 from Ugandan Parliament as it will cause undue interference in the management of HIV/AIDS in Uganda and some gains so far made.

*For God and My Country*

*For details and partnership on this appeal,  
Contact: Uhspa-Uganda  
Plot 4A, Kimera Road, Ntinda, Kampala (Next to Quality Supermarket)  
Tel: cell. + 256 (0)392911830,  
Email: [uhspauganda@gmail.com](mailto:uhspauganda@gmail.com).*

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Uganda Health and Science Press Association (UHSPA-Uganda)  
Women's Network for Human Rights Advocacy (WONETHA)  
Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum-Uganda  
Frank & Candy -Uganda

Rain Bow Health Foundation-Mbarara

Download text of this appeal. Click here: <http://uhspauganda.blogspot.com/2010/11/open-Urgent-appeal-to-hivaid-civil.html>

**Annex : A letter to the Editor in a Ugandan newspaper, Daily Monitor, advocating for sex workers rights, the fruits of Sex workers activism published December 2, 2010**

Fac: 0312-301114 Preference will be given to shorter letters on topical issues.

### What's the role of Health Ministry?

On Tuesday night, I watched TV footage of whistles treating the people infested by jiggers in Busoga. They carried placards some of which read: 'Always clean where you sleep and remove all the dirt'. This was good. However, the question is, do we really need foreigners to solve this kind of problem for us? This is uncalled for and it is reaffirmation that we are still a dark continent.

What is the role of the Ministry of Primary Healthcare in this country? Is there any justification for this ministry any more? How about local leaders in Busoga, what are they doing?

Let's involve foreigners in other things but not treating jiggers. This portrays Uganda as completely backward country.

I call upon the citizens of this country who are in influential positions to redraw their maps and change the compass direction in the way things are moving. Let's not be so basic.

**Gerard Wandera Obbo,**  
Tororo

### Bwindi ignored

It is perturbed by the level of insensitivity that the government exhibits towards its own sources of income. I grew up in munga and have seen the tourism potential of Bwindi Impenetrable National Forest since 1993. I can confidently say Bwindi has been the largest tourism income earner because of the rare species found in it, including mountain gorillas, owls and bird.

However, the road network that connects this national park to Kabale, and

## Letter of the day

# Involve sex workers in the fight against HIV/Aids

It is now more than 20 years since HIV/Aids manifested itself in the country and over the years, Uganda has emerged as a champion in the fight against the disease. Efforts to combat the pandemic have enabled Uganda realise the drop in prevalence from 18 per cent in 1992 to 6.4 per cent in 2010.

Though Uganda has been praised for the success it has registered in the fight against HIV/Aids, there is now a cause for alarm as the prevalence begins to rise. The key risk factors are multiple concurrent sexual partnerships amongst the youth and adults, discordance and non-disclosure among couples, avoiding condom use, transactional sex, and cross-generational sex among others.

The modes of transmission study projected in the year 2008 that 43 per cent of all new HIV infections were among mutual monogamous sexual relationships, while 46 per cent were among persons involved in multiple sexual partnerships. Commercial sex contributed 22 per cent, while heterosexual casual sex contributed 14 per cent.

Sex workers are, therefore, a high risk group. So, it is vital we focus on the transactional sex as well in the

Say no to HIV/AIDS

fight against HIV. Sex workers have relatively high numbers of sexual partners and the reality is that their clients do not always use condoms. In some cases, this is because sex workers have no access to condoms, or are not aware of their importance.

In other cases, sex workers are simply powerless to negotiate safer sex. Clients may refuse to pay if they have to use a condom, and use intimidation or violence to enforce unprotected sex. They may also offer more money for unprotected sex - a proposal that can be hard to refuse if the sex worker is desperate for money.

Protecting sex workers from HIV/Aids does not mean promoting the trade. You protect them while at the same time introducing alternative income-generating ways to them. The high prevalence and incidence of HIV/Aids among sex workers should serve as a wake-up call to change our interventions by targeting these group in HIV-fight interventions.

Among the sexual networks, you cannot rule out a sex worker lying somewhere in-between the sex partners. Many men, whether married or not, often stealthily visit sex workers and in the process, get infected and in turn they infect their regular partners.

Every Ugandan has a right to good health. Rather than continue to criminalise sex workers and pretend that they do not exist, we need to involve them too in HIV prevention campaigns. They too need to be targeted with well-implemented skills-based HIV/Aids education in order to help them develop knowledge and change their ways considering that the law in Uganda criminalises the act of prostitution.

**Joseph Magonola,**  
HIV/Aids activist,  
Kampala

## Government should ban smoking in public places

Following a new report published last week, which declared smoke-free zones on public places, there are debates in countries like the US where

## **Annex 2**

*Above: L-R Health Rights activists: Raymond Ruyooka (paediatric HIV), Macklean Kyomya (Sexworkers), Paddy Masembe (Youths HIV) AND Aaron Muhinda (Access to Medicine, ART).*



*L-R Paddy Masembe, Macklean Kyomya and LGBTI activist Kikonyogo Kivumbi.*