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09 December 2013

Apology Note: On Thursday, 05 December, we experienced some unforeseen technical issues with our website which resulted in some of our readers not being able to access the links in this newsletter. If you were affected, we are very sorry for any inconvenience caused. We are now happy that these problems have been solved, which is why we are re-sending the newsletter.



December 2013, Issue 10

Dear Readers,

This issue of our newsletter comes at a time of the year of increased awareness campaigns and activism. 25 November is dedicated to [The International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women](#), which also marks the first day of the [16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign](#), followed by the 25th anniversary of [World AIDS Day](#) on 01 December. Lastly, another significant day is to be celebrated on 10 Dec: [Human Rights Day](#).

We wished to publish this issue not necessarily on World AIDS Day but, given our particular focus on women living with HIV and our recent [study on the links between HIV and gender-based violence](#), we wanted it to fall within the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence. This is a symbol of our appreciation of the ongoing work, both national and global, to help improve the lives of all women and girls living with HIV, including those who also experience abuse.

In this issue I am excited to introduce to you some new faces to the Sophia Forum, two of which, Mazviita and Tasbiah, have each written an article. Fiona Hale and Mandy Webb are our other contributors for this issue.

We have some new projects coming up in the new year, such as the [WISE-UP+](#) programme in collaboration with Positively UK. Positively UK have just launched a new initiative to empower and educate women living with HIV - you can read more about the launch in this newsletter.

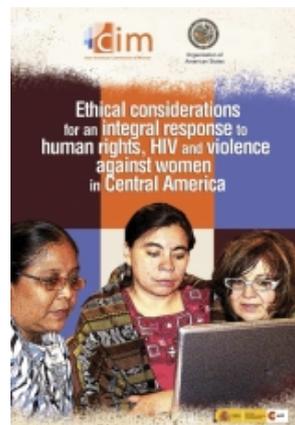
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There is still time to sponsor
[Lynda Shental](#)
to run 10 miles to raise money for
the Sophia Forum

Stockport 10 is an infamously tough 10 mile road race with many steep inclines and a killer last couple of miles. The race is on the 8th of December 2013.

Lynda trains off road as she has little cartilage left on her knees so it would be great to have sponsorship to motivate her and what a fantastic way to raise much needed cash for the Sophia Forum.

Please [show your support](#) too.



Vazquez, M.J. and Hale, F. (2011) [Ethical considerations for an integral response to human rights, HIV and violence against women in Central America](#)

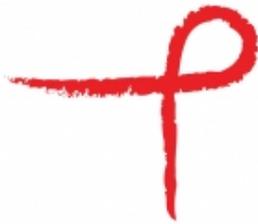
Finally, please support our work by making even a small donation. There are only a few days left until our trustee [Lynda Shentall's](#) fundraising [run on 08 Dec](#). There is still time to show your support today.

See you in 2014!

Anca Nitulescu

Communications intern & Newsletter editor

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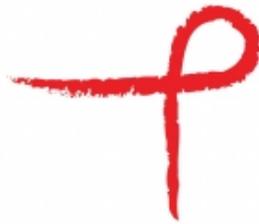


MAZVIITA DASHIANI
MAKIYI:

[A mother's challenge of living with HIV in the UK whilst facing an indeterminate immigration status](#)

"We have just marked the 25th Anniversary of World AIDS Day. Although we have achieved many milestones, we still have a long fight ahead of us. Not only do we have to challenge HIV-related stigma and educate people about HIV but we also need to promote a better quality of life for those living with HIV both in the UK and around the world. For us women, the battle is somewhat made harder by many other factors. We continue having to negotiate safer sex, battle with gender-based violence as well as managing the social roles that are imposed on us solely because of our gender."

[\(Read full article\)](#)



TASBIAH
AKHTAR:

[Women Helping Women](#)

"Pregnant women with HIV in UK are at a much greater advantage than women in Sub-Saharan Africa. As a resource-rich country, we can offer the necessary testing, treatment and medication to any woman living with HIV. In addition, we also offer both the pre and post-natal services to prevent transmission of HIV to their child. Pregnancy is a very delicate and fragile phase of any woman's life, regardless of whether she is living with HIV or not.

On news of their pregnancy they are joyous and in a celebratory mood. But in sub-Saharan Africa, once a woman has been tested for HIV, and if the results are positive, the worries begin to

FIONA HALE:

[Violence Against Women Living with HIV](#)

*"It is hard indeed to notice anything for which the languages available to us have no description."
(Alan Wilson Watts)*

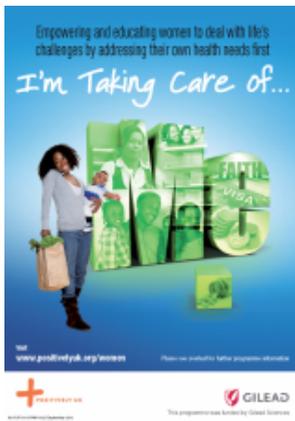
I came into the world of HIV organisations through languages. Ten years ago, in 2003, an old friend mentioned that an organisation she was close to was having communications problems because of language barriers on its international board. The organisation was the [International Community of Women living with HIV/AIDS \(ICW\)](#). I offered to provide pro bono translations between English, Spanish and French. As I translated their emails, I was blown away by the commitment, passion and determination of the women involved. When I had the opportunity to apply for a job as Acting Coordinator of their network, I knew I wanted to work with these women. I had found a place that felt inspirational, challenging and important – a network that was grappling with some of the key issues facing women globally.

At that time, while violence against women living with HIV was a fact of life for many ICW members, violence against women after an HIV diagnosis seemed to be rarely considered by the wider world. It was seldom mentioned even within the HIV sector. In fact, violence in the lives of women with HIV was usually translated into the language of stigma and discrimination. On many occasions, I was struck by the fact that when women living with HIV talked about violent and abusive situations they had faced, they referred to it as stigma. The language of stigma and discrimination has been an extremely powerful tool for people living with HIV, making visible a whole range of shockingly common experiences. But the experiences of women living with HIV must also be described in the language of violence against women - the language of the global women's movement and of international commitments concerning women's human rights.

[\(Read full article\)](#)



[Hale, F. and Vazquez, M.J. \(2010\) Violence Against Women Living with HIV/AIDS: A Background Paper](#)



I'M TAKING CARE OF ME

(a [Positively UK](#) project)

With women living with HIV always at heart, [Positively UK](#) (the former Positively Women) hosted the launch of [I'm Taking Care of Me](#) – a new project produced in partnership with [Gilead](#) aiming to empower and educate women living with HIV about important aspect of health and healthcare in order to face life's many challenges.

The programme consists of a series of videos with presentations, case studies, and group discussion guides. These resources aim to support women manage all aspects of their life from family life and pregnancy, talking to their doctor, managing HIV medications, and tackling gender-based violence. The video on gender-based violence features [Dr Alice Welbourn](#), Sophia Forum co-founder and current chair of trustees.

[\(read the full launch report\)](#)



The people behind the project: Silvia Petretti, Deputy CEO, Allan Anderson, Chief Executive, and Angelina Namiba,

burden not just herself, but will inadvertently affect her unborn child, too."

[\(Read full article\)](#)

Sophia 

WISE-UP+

(Women Inspire, Support and Empower - Unleashing Positive Potential)

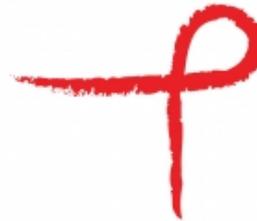
We wish to continue our work to raise awareness with the UK Government and service sectors, to implement international commitments in relation to women and HIV within domestic policy.

In order to achieve effective recognition that a gender equality lens matters when addressing the needs of women and girls with HIV, the Sophia Forum WISE-UP+ programme aims to support a new generation of women living with HIV, including newly diagnosed and younger women to feel empowered to understand & fulfil their rights.

Project funded by the Lottery's Awards for All Programme.



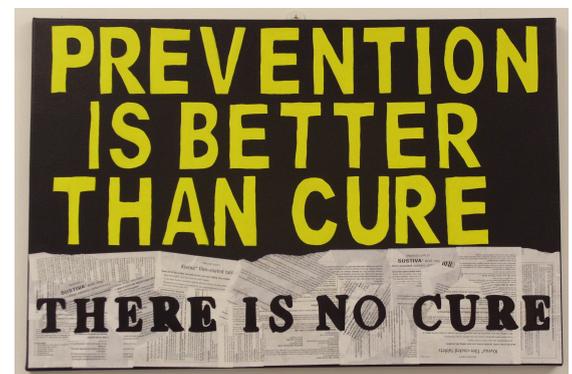
Fiona is a freelance researcher, editor and translator, focusing on HIV and violence against women. Her publications include ['Violence Against Women Living with HIV/AIDS: A Background Paper'](#) (2010) co-authored with MariJo Vazquez. In her past life she worked for [ActionAid's](#) Latin America and Caribbean programme, and coordinated the [International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS \(ICW\)](#). She lives in the North of England with her partner and daughter. (www.fionahale.com; fiona @ fionahale dot com)



MANDY WEBB: HIV is not OK

"HIV is not just for World AIDS Day, HIV is every day. More and more people are diagnosed HIV-positive and we are continually told by the media, by our consultants, or by some HIV organisations that it is a manageable condition and not a death sentence anymore. I feel that this is not entirely correct. People are still dying, they are still being diagnosed far too late so the virus has taken its toll on their immune systems. Above all, stigma is still a huge issue. So many people living with HIV still live in fear of being "found out"."

[\(Read full article\)](#)



[Mandy](#) is a woman living openly with HIV, and an artist based in Portsmouth. The picture above is from a collection of work Mandy created around Poster Artwork/Propaganda Artwork for one of her exhibitions a few years back.

Project Manager 'From Pregnancy to
Baby and Beyond'



Related Articles & News

On World AIDS Day,
[Dr Alice Welbourn](#), asks:
is there [an end to AIDS?](#)

Two blogs by [Silvia Petretti](#):
[World AIDS Day](#)

[Seeking Safety and Respect –
beyond Gender Based Violence and
HIV](#)

The Guardian: [The Link in Africa
Between Women and HIV](#)

World Aids Day: Empowering
pregnant women with HIV in South
Africa – [video](#)

Anca Nitulescu:
[25th November: International Day for
the Elimination of Violence Against
Women](#)

Robert Fieldhouse:
[Celebrating Success: SHE](#)
(article available on page 40)

easyfundraising
.org.uk

Someone has been fundraising for
the Sophia Forum.

Thank you so much if you have been
a part of this!

Please click on the two images
attached for further details about
how to support us at no extra cost to
you at all.



On the Vimeo Salamander
Trust page you can watch
three powerful [videos](#) about
women's experiences of
living with HIV.

The films were devised,
filmed, and edited by the
women who are mothers,
peer mothers, and staff of
Positively UK in reaction to
their own experiences of
living with HIV. All the content
and film-making are their
own, and created as part of a
collaboration between
Positively UK and [the
Salamander Trust](#).



The Red Ribbon Tree at
Positively UK- supporting
people living with HIV

Sophia

The Sophia Forum is the UK Chapter of the [UNAIDS
Global Coalition on Women and AIDS](#)
(www.womenandaids.net)



Disclaimer

*All the pieces are the writers' own stories and do not
necessarily reflect the views of Sophia Forum.*



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For more information about women and HIV visit our [website](#).
To send feedback on this newsletter please [email](#) us.

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With many thanks to
all the contributors.

(For confidentiality reasons, some
of the names in this newsletter are
pseudonyms.)

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