



The Sophia Forum is the UK Chapter of the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS. Our aim is to make sure that UK policy and practice on HIV and AIDS address the specific needs of women.

This newsletter includes updates, comment and resources which we hope you find interesting and useful for your work.

We are grateful to UNAIDS, whose financial support has enabled us to produce the newsletter and to recruit some new faces to Sophia:

Helen Wollaston, consultant

Kate Seeley, Policy and Research intern

Anca Nitulescu, Communications intern

Contribute towards our 2012 campaign

We need baseline evidence on the extent to which the rights of women living with HIV in the UK are upheld. In 2012, our priority is to raise awareness of the links between HIV and gender-based violence. New research is urgently needed to understand the experiences of women affected by violence and HIV in this country, in order to identify gaps in policy, care and treatment.

Please help us to put women's issues on the agenda of UK HIV policy by making a donation today through PayPal. Any information gathered is kept in strictest confidence.

www.sophiaforum.net



**The Global Coalition
on Women and AIDS**

Violence against women and HIV: understanding the links

// Any failure in preventing violence against women and girls will result in more HIV-positive cases and more deaths." **GRACIA VIOLETA ROSS, BOLIVIAN HIV AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST**

Gap in UK evidence

Despite the international evidence, very little is known about the links between violence against women and HIV in the UK, which means that strategies and support services are not joined up. The Sophia Forum has obtained a grant from the Big Lottery Fund's 'Awards for All' programme to explore the links between gender-based violence and HIV in England.

Sophia Forum's Policy and Research intern Kate Seeley, who completed an MSc in International Development in 2010, is reviewing existing research on the relationship between HIV and gender-based violence. Kate explains why the

project is needed. "The experiences of women living with HIV are so different from those of men. It is crucial to understand how gender violence relates to HIV and how we can go about shaping national policy to address these intersecting health and human rights issues."

Kate will be talking to researchers, policy makers, practitioners, service providers and women living with HIV to find out how much is already known about HIV as a cause and a consequence of violence against women in England, and identify the gaps in policy and practice.

If you would like to be involved in this research contact kate@sophiaforum.net

Violence against women in the UK

- Each year across the UK 3 million women experience violence and there are many more living with the legacies of past abuse. This includes: domestic violence, rape and sexual violence, sexual harassment, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, crimes in the name of honour, trafficking and sexual exploitation. It is mostly committed by men whom women know or are in a close relationship with.
- At least 1 in 4 women in the UK will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime.
- Domestic violence accounts for 18% of all violent crime.
- In the 2010–11 British Crime Survey, 73% of incidents of domestic violence were experienced repeatedly by the same individuals. Of those interviewed, just under half experienced violence more than once, and nearly a quarter experienced violence three or more times.
- Every year around 400,000 women are sexually assaulted and 80,000 women raped.

To find out more visit:

www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime/violence-against-women-girls

Freephone national helplines

National Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 2000 247

Rape Crisis 0808 802 9999

International briefing links HIV and gender-based violence



A new issue brief on the links between violence against women and HIV published in December 2011 by the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS gives three reasons to link campaigns to tackle violence against women with action on HIV:

- forced sex may directly lead to HIV transmission
- women and girls are less able to negotiate safer sex when they live in fear of violence
- women living with HIV may face increased levels of violence, due to stigma and discrimination.

The briefing summarises international research on the prevalence of different forms of violence against women and girls; explains the legal and human rights framework; gives evidence from India, South America and Africa to demonstrate the links between violence against women and HIV, highlights examples of good practice and recommends actions for government, health services and development agencies.

Available at: www.womenandaids.net



Silvia Petretti, before her presentation to the UN High Level Meeting, June 2011

Opinion: Gender implications of Fowler report

Silvia Petretti, Community Development Manager at Positively UK, who gave evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on HIV and AIDS, comments on the report, known as the Fowler report after the Committee Chair, Lord Fowler.

// The House of Lord Select Committee on HIV and AIDS report: 'No vaccine, no cure: HIV and AIDS in the United Kingdom' has to be applauded, firstly for putting back the spotlight on HIV in the UK. The recommendations on prevention, testing and a national awareness campaign which addresses stigma are all extremely laudable. The report suggests that testing should be routinely carried out at GP surgeries, Accident and Emergency departments and other places where people access health services. The report also supports the regulation and availability of home testing.

Obviously reducing undiagnosed HIV and late diagnosis are crucial issues, but I am very worried because we know that healthcare providers outside the HIV sector are often very ignorant about HIV. I have seen this for myself when training GPs and the UK Stigma Index revealed that almost a third of people with HIV had encountered stigma in health settings. For women this is particularly dangerous, because we access health services more than

men and we are more vulnerable to violence if we are diagnosed with HIV.

Testing must be done with sensitivity, including a risk assessment for gender violence and with prompt referral to specialist treatment, care and support services. This can be achieved with investment, training and support of healthcare practitioners.

Also I would have liked a stronger focus on upholding human rights – to ensure a high quality of life for those of us who will live, hopefully, long lives with HIV. When it is too late for prevention, we need to ensure the highest standard of care and quality of life, so that people can live fulfilling lives and continue contributing to our communities."

Follow Silvia's blog, Speaking Up! The diary of an HIV+ activist at: <http://hivpolicyspeakup.wordpress.com>

The Fowler report can be accessed at: www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201012/ldselect/lddaids/188/18802.htm

A resolution for 2012: Talk about sex with your children

Hosanna Bankhead, Health Trainer with Terrence Higgins Trust Scotland, feels secrecy fuels stigma about HIV within African communities living in the UK. Hosanna's recommendations are backed up by UNESCO's international research and guidelines for comprehensive sexuality education. They recommend that all children, from the age of 5 years, should receive age-appropriate guidance. This means starting with basic skills such as mutual respect between boys and girls, good listening and communication skills.

In the UK there is still no compulsory sex education in schools. Most young people report that their sex education is just a few hours in a biology lesson. Meanwhile, around 10% of young people in the UK have chlamydia. And the UK still has very high teenage pregnancy rates. Surely it is time that we support young people more effectively.

Read Hosanna's article in African News, at: www.theafricanews.com/africans-in-uk/3474-join-campaign-to-support-people-living-with-hiv-uk-africans-asked.html

UNESCO's guidelines can be found at: www.unesco.org/new/en/hiv-and-aids/our-priorities-in-hiv/sexuality-education/international-technical-guidance-on-sexuality-education

HELP US, FOR FREE...

If you use www.easysearch.org.uk as your search engine and select Sophia Forum as your chosen charity, we get 0.5p per search. Also ... when you buy anything online, go to www.easyfundraising.org.uk and select Sophia Forum as your chosen charity. If you go through this site whenever you want to buy something online, from clothes to train tickets, books to presents, there is an automatic contribution to Sophia.

Fund the Global Fund

Please sign the petition www.womeneurope.net to ensure full funding for the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria – all of which are preventable or manageable diseases. Just US\$5 can buy a bed net to stop children from getting malaria. Two billion US\$ are needed over the next six months. In global financial terms, this is a drop in the ocean yet it will keep millions of women, men and children alive, well and able to work and look after themselves.

Exclusive to Sophia!

Artist Beshlie McKelvie has worked with Kenyan women artisans to produce a beautiful range of dresses in rich and vibrant colours. Beshlie has kindly offered to donate 75% of the proceeds from sales of her exclusive Kenyan collection to the Sophia Forum. View the dresses and find out how to order: www.beshliemckelvie.com/textile/africa/kenyanproject



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Change rules on medication for asylum seekers

Sophia Forum patron, Professor Jane Anderson, argued in a recent Guardian article for a change in the law on access to drug treatment for visitors to the UK and asylum seekers.

Jane Anderson, the current chair of the British HIV Association, says there is no sense in leaving people without treatment, following studies this year that showed the medication prevented transmission as well as keeping people alive. "The legislation raises complications about getting the right treatment into the right people. It deters people from coming to services and it is very confusing," said Professor Anderson.

Having HIV still carries a heavy stigma. Among the patients at the Homerton Hospital in east London, where she works, Anderson says about 30% "haven't really told anybody" that they have HIV. Many of those who have, face discrimination and rejection by their community, families and friends.

Professor Anderson and her colleagues are also concerned about new commissioning arrangements in the NHS. While specialist care will be organised by the National Commissioning Board, testing and prevention are likely to be localised and the long-term needs of people with HIV who are now able to live longer will probably be managed by GPs.

RESOURCES

Policy analysis

These two policy analysis tools on gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health and rights for national strategic plans (NSPs) were developed in Africa as a framework to ensure the needs of women and girls are embedded in HIV and AIDS NSPs and could equally be adapted for use in the UK. Available at: www.salamandertrust.net/resources/Framework_GBVPolicyAnalysisTool.pdf and www.salamandertrust.net/resources/SRHRandHIVPolicyToolforNSPs.pdf

Ethical considerations

An Organization of American States programme in Central America aims to reduce the prevalence of HIV and violence against women through a model of integrated policies and programmes addressing both epidemics. Their guide *Ethical considerations for an integral response to human rights, HIV and violence against women in Central America* could also be useful in the UK context.

Available at: www.oas.org/en/cim/docs/VIH-VAW-Consideracioneseticas-EN.pdf

Peer support

The She Programme, designed by women living with HIV and colleagues, seeks to support other women with HIV to feel empowered, through peer support sessions, facilitated by women with HIV. www.shetoshe.org contains a wealth of resources for women and girls living with HIV, their friends and support workers.

Peer support during pregnancy

Read the evaluation of Positively UK's great peer-led Pregnancy and Beyond project. www.positivelyuk.org/pregnancy_and_beyond.php

Support groups in Scotland

Research on support groups for African women living with HIV in Edinburgh and Glasgow has been published by HIV Scotland. *We are like sisters* is available at: www.hivscotland.com/data-and-research/research-library/view-document/we-are-like-sisters



Did you know?

Over **50%** of the 34 million adults with HIV globally are now women.

28,100 women in the UK are currently living with HIV: this is now approximately **1 in 3** of the total number of people living with HIV in the UK. This percentage is growing.

Around **30%** of women living with HIV in the UK were born here.

Over **99.9%** of babies born to women with HIV in the UK are now born free of HIV, even with normal delivery. This is thanks to advances in effective medication, good care and support from all around them.

Life expectancy for women with HIV in the UK, if on the right medication and with the right support, can be as long as any other women of their age.

Source: HIV in UK 2010. Available at: www.hpa.org.uk

Treatment v prevention

£762m a year was spent on treatment for HIV and AIDS in the UK and just £2.9m was spent on prevention.

Estimates for the cost of a lifetime of treatment for someone with HIV in the UK is between £280,000 and £360,000.

Source: No vaccine, no cure.
Available at: www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201012/ldselect/lddaids/188/18802.htm

Crossing continents

The prevalence of HIV amongst young people aged 18–24 is just over 10% in South Africa and less than 1% in US. Yet new research found young people in South Africa had their first sex at a later age, have fewer sexual partners, and practise more safer sex than their US counterparts. How can the more than 10-fold difference in HIV prevalence be explained?

Find out more from <http://hivthisweek.unaids.org>



With many thanks for your support and best wishes for a happy, healthy and just 2012 from all at the Sophia Forum, January 2012.

For more information about women and HIV visit our website: www.sophiaforum.net

To send feedback on this newsletter, or to request printed copies, please email us at info@sophiaforum.net

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We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this newsletter:

Silvia Petretti, Community Development Manager at Positively UK

Hosanna Bankhead, Health Trainer at Terrence Higgins Trust Scotland

Professor Jane Anderson, Chair of British HIV Association

Helen Wollaston, editor

Jane Shepherd, designer