

## Women's rights here, right now

Cologne, Vienna, 15.07.2010 "Women's rights here, right now" women demand at the 18th International AIDS Conference (IAC) in Vienna. From July 18 till 23 experts and activists from all over the world will meet. The conference will be an important platform to advance women's rights in the AIDS response, and to examine whether and where the response is falling short for women and girls.

Globally, about the half of all people living with HIV are women. "Gender inequality is both a cause and a consequence of the epidemic", says Tyler Crone, director of the global ATHENA network. Women are also facing poverty and violence more often than men. Depending economically on men, many women do not have access to HIV prevention or therapy. "That's why we put emphasis on the agency of women and girls", says ATHENA member and HIV-positive activist Alice Welbourn. "To advance their leadership and meaningful participation in the AIDS response." ATHENA as a global network stands for the rights of women and girls, and is committed to advancing gender equity and human rights in the AIDS response.

The GSSG is also dedicated to women's and girls' sexual health and rights. "Still, women living with HIV have to face stigma and discrimination", confirms founder Harriet Langanke. "Their right to have a sexual life or a family is often denied – even in Europe." GSSG is the legal body for the nationwide German network women and AIDS and also a member of ATHENA. "Europe is both a mirror **of** the world and **on** the world", Crone, Welbourn and Langanke point out. "Our call at this International AIDS Conference is for European donor governments to be held to account for how they are addressing women's rights in the context of HIV both at home and around the world."

At the IAC, GSSG and ATHENA together with other partnering organisations from all over the world have prepared the Women's Networking Zone. This public area at the conference aims to make visible both the visions and the challenges facing women living with and without an HIV diagnosis. "The Women's Networking Zone as a forum aspires to continue to build a community of advocates committed to gender equality and human rights", Tyler Crone and Alice Welbourn agree. "We need strong alliances to secure the full endorsement of human rights for women and girls, otherwise the response to HIV and AIDS won't succeed."

### Further information:

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