

**AFRICAN UNION**

**الاتحاد الأفريقي**



**UNION AFRICAINE**

**UNIÃO AFRICANA**

---

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia P. O. Box 3243 Telephone: 5517 700 Fax: 5511299  
website : [www.africa-union.org](http://www.africa-union.org)

---

**Accelerating Action for Women Empowerment and Gender Equality in the area of  
HIV and Sexual & Reproductive Health & Rights**

**Getting to Zero in Africa**

**High level meeting of the GlobalPOWER® Network Africa, in partnership with the  
African Union and UNAIDS**

**24 and 25 May 2012**

**Harare, Zimbabwe**

**Concept note**

**Background**

In sub-Saharan Africa, the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV remains extremely high; with 59% of all people living with HIV being women. Of the total number of young people aged between 15-24, 72% women. Young women bear the brunt of new infections, and in some parts of Africa they are up to 6 times more likely to acquire HIV than their male peers.<sup>1</sup> While 22% of all new infections globally occur among girls and young women, aged 15 to 24, in Sub-Saharan Africa this amounts to 31%.<sup>2</sup> UNAIDS estimated that about 370 000 children were newly infected in 2009, with at least 76% of the infections occurring in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>3</sup> According to WHO 2008 data, more than half of all maternal deaths occur in Sub-Saharan Africa, with an average maternal mortality ratio of 620 per 100,000 live births.<sup>4</sup> The high adolescent fertility rate of 117 per 1000 of girls aged 15 to 19 years clearly represents the underutilization of educational and economic opportunities for girls and young women.<sup>5</sup>

Recognizing that prevailing gender inequalities– and consequent violence increases women and girls’ risk of HIV infection, whilst further hindering the achievement of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Global Report, UNAIDS Report On The, Global Aids Epidemic | 2010

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> WHO, World health statistics 2011; Geneva 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in particular MDG 3, 4, 5, and 6, high level women decision-makers from Africa<sup>6</sup> met in September 2010 in Washington DC, to discuss their role in accelerating the implementation of the UNAIDS Agenda for Women and Girls.<sup>7</sup> The meeting, hosted by UNAIDS and the Centre for Women Policy Studies, built on the Global Partnership of Women Representatives (GlobalPOWER®) approach of establishing networks among women Leaders and Parliamentarians to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. The Washington meeting decided to establish the GlobalPOWER® Network Africa, chaired by, Her Excellency Thokozani Khupe, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Zimbabwe, to promote and accelerate action for women, girls, gender equality and HIV in Africa.

While adopting the UNAIDS call for “*Getting to Zero*” to halt the spread of HIV infection and mitigate the impact of the epidemic on women and girls, including those living with and affected by HIV, in support of the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS,<sup>8</sup> the GlobalPOWER® Women Network Africa recognizes that progress on HIV and sexual and reproductive health and rights are intertwined and mutually reinforcing. The sexual and reproductive health and rights agenda is key to achieving the goals set in the Political Declaration in Africa, in particular the reduction of new HIV infections by half; access to antiretroviral treatment for 15 million people by 2015; and elimination of vertical transmission of HIV and substantial reduction in AIDS-related maternal deaths by 2015. HIV remaining one of the leading causes of death in women of reproductive age in in Sub-Saharan Africa and contributing significantly to maternal and child mortality, achievement of these goals will have a significant positive impact on maternal and child health.

The GlobalPOWER® Network Africa has therefore decided to organize a high-level meeting, in collaboration with the African Union and UNAIDS, on/ aiming at Accelerating Action for Women Empowerment and Gender Equality in the area of HIV and Sexual & Reproductive Health & Rights. The meeting seeks to generate responses that will align the HIV and the Sexual and Reproductive Health Agenda to action for women empowerment and the human rights of women and girls. Furthermore, key continental and global benchmarks, such as the Kampala Declaration, the Maputo Plan of Action, the Abuja Declaration and Abuja Call for Universal Access, the MDGs health-related targets and Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Africa Fit for Children, the Campaign for Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA), African Women's Decade, and the Agenda for Accelerated Country Action for Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV will serve as guiding commitments for the meeting.

---

<sup>6</sup> Women members of Parliament and Ministers from Ethiopia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe

<sup>7</sup> UNAIDS, UNAIDS Agenda for Accelerated Country Action for Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV, Geneva, 2010

<sup>8</sup> United Nation, Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS: Intensifying our Efforts to Eliminate HIV/AIDS, New York, 2011.

The meeting- scheduled to take place from 24 to 25 May 2012, in Harare Zimbabwe - will convene women parliamentarians, leading African women entrepreneurs, civil society leaders, and development partners, to agree on priorities to accelerate action. The meeting will serve as a strategic political platform for interested parties in advancing innovative game-changing approaches that positively impact on the lives of women and girls in Africa, and support the achievements of MDG 3, 4, 5, and 6.

**Goal:** to promote accelerated action for women empowerment and gender equality in the area of HIV and Sexual & Reproductive Health & Rights, in Sub-Saharan Africa, focusing on the vulnerability of girls and young women.

In support of the HLM targets, the summit will focus on the following priority areas within MDG 4, 5 and 6, with MDG 1 and 3 underpinning these:

- **MDG4:** to accelerate the implementation of the Global Plan to eliminate vertical transmission of HIV and to keep the mother alive.
- **MDG5:** to accelerate progress on the African initiative CARMMA, capitalising on PMNCH and the pink/red ribbon initiative (cervical and breast cancer).
- **MDG6:** to address the increased vulnerability of young women, 15 to 24, by advancing education, empowerment and leadership opportunities for young women, in particular those living with HIV.
- To call for sustained resources for women, girls and gender equality, within national HIV responses.
- To enhance mutual accountability by African Governments and development partners for the commitments made to advance the cause of women and girls

**Expected Outcomes from the Summit.**

- The Harare Priorities to accelerate action for Women Empowerment and Gender Equality in the area of HIV and Sexual & Reproductive Health & RightsA in Africa, specifically **focusing on the vulnerability of girls and young women**;
- High-level political advocacy and social mobilization platform of African Women in Leadership (GlobalPOWER® Network Africa) to encourage, and where possible facilitate, accelerated implementation of continental and global commitments to the cause of women and girls in Africa, specifically related to of the achievement of MDGs 3, 4, 5 and 6;
- Identified set of replicable innovative actions for women and girls, including optimal community engagement;
- Agreed actions for enhanced resource mobilisation, financing sustainability and accountability for the cause of women, girls, gender equality and HIV.

The outcomes of the high level meeting will be tabled at the African Union Heads of States summit in Lilongwe in July 2012, as well as during a side session during the International AIDS Conference in Washington in July 2012.