

# Mujeres Adelante

Daily newsletter on women's rights and HIV – Mexico City 2008

## In Focus...

Tyler Crone, Johanna Kehler

### Who is speaking and what is being heard?

The International AIDS Conference is an opportunity for us to take stock of where we are in the response to HIV and AIDS, what lessons we have learned, and what we wish to create for the future. We are producing this newsletter to engage critical and tough questions, and to create an inclusive space for dialogue. We

shared history of organizing around women's rights at International AIDS Conferences – challenging each of us to reflect upon where the AIDS response has evolved, and where it has not. Thus, we should ask ourselves as to why the questions being asked and concerns being raised around women and women's rights in 2008 echo those

has yet to be acted upon and translated into programming that truly reflects our knowledge; responds to our realities and needs; and thus become *strategies for change*.

During the session, *Empowerment: Powered by Women*, Esther Mwauru-Muiru of GROOTS Kenya called upon the global community

*...to transform ourselves to see grassroots women as experts, and not as recipients of resources, services and programs.*

Melissa Gira of the Desiree Alliance reminds us that

*...sex workers are experts in safer sex, but the global community is looking to criminalization as a tool of HIV prevention.*

Siphiwe Hlophe of Swaziland for Positive Living shared her experience of mobilizing grandmothers to march on the streets to speak out about the health system shifting the burden of care to grandmothers, that *...We must be fed up as grandmothers. We must rise up as grandmothers.*

And Sekan Wulan Sari of the Stigma Foundation highlighted that *...harm reduction is not*



Voices of positive women, Women's Networking Zone, Toronto 2006

seek to capture the discourse and debate that will happen both within the formal conference program and throughout the Global Village, as well as at related satellites. We seek to link community perspectives with formal research presentations – and to capture what is being said on the panels, from the audience and in the hallways.

Mujeres Adelante builds on a

raised in the 1980s and 1990s? And maybe we need to ask ourselves why, after so many years, the situation for millions of women has not changed.

As the OSI Satellite on 02 August 2008, *Strategies for Change: Breaking Barriers to HIV Prevention, Treatment, and Care for Women* clearly highlighted, much of what we have learned

#### Whats inside:

**Special report:**  
The waiting must end

**Feedback from the Global Village...**

We need to listen to the realities of women's lives

**News from the 'margins'...** It is about recognising the difference

**Women's realities...**  
Positive women have started to organise themselves

**Women's Voices...**  
We need the 'right woman' at the table

**Regional voices...**  
Women's human rights are part of the national response

*inclusive of a gender perspective or a human rights perspective*

-- thus often limiting the effectiveness of programs and interventions, as well as perpetuating stigma, discrimination and violation of rights of women drug users.

Dialogue, engagement, alliance building and women's voices are central to our success in identifying and ensuring rights-based responses to the epidemic. **Mujeres Adelante** is a space for us to explore the challenges at hand, to ask questions and seek answers, and to bring forward spaces for women's voices – old and new, diverse and unified – to comment, shape, critique and respond to current and future interventions responding to women's

realities, risks and needs. We aim to bring the voices from the margins to the center. We aim to trace our history as a movement and to map our way forward. We invite you to join in this endeavor – and to view **Mujeres Adelante** as a vehicle for our collective alliance building around women's rights and HIV.

*...we as women have the capacity, we have many different capacities. What is lacking is broadening the concept and understanding of 'participation'. We need to be inclusive, because everyone has something to contribute in one or another way. But the problem is that most of our contributions are not valued. So, it is necessary for institutions, organizations,*

**...we should ask ourselves as to why the questions being asked and concerns being raised around women and women's rights in 2008 echo those raised in the 1980s and 1990s?..**

*networks – both of women and men – UN systems, and other networks of positive and non-positive members to redefine what 'participation' is, and how people can participate in very many ways and how to value those different ways.* – Mari Jo Vazquez, Chair of the ATHENA Network

We invite you to join us on this journey through the International AIDS Conference, to participate in the conversation, and to reflect back with us as we look forward, seeking answers as to how the AIDS response has evolved for women and women's rights, what we have left to achieve, and how do we ensure that women's voices are heard.

## Why Mujeres Adelante?

We see this newsletter is a crucial 'tool' of advocating for women's rights in particular, and human rights in general, as the key to adequate and rights-based responses to HIV and AIDS. Thus, the newsletter will be a means of:

- Providing a gendered reporting and analysis of daily events and activities in and around AIDS2008;
- Highlighting women's rights and realities as presented at AIDS2008;
- Focusing in its 'coverage' on sessions, presentations, findings, new interventions and issues designed to address specifically women's HIV risks, vulnerabilities and realities;
- Producing a daily 'news coverage' of the conference, specifically highlighting women's realities and needs in established and proposed new interventions, programmes and responses to HIV and AIDS; and,
- Raising commonly 'silenced' concerns, such as
  - o the implication of especially HIV prevention strategies on women and women's HIV risks,
  - o the realities, needs and rights of women living with HIV to sexual pleasure, reproductive desires, and choice,
  - o the general lack of consideration of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights in responses to HIV and AIDS, and
  - o realities, needs and rights of marginalized and often 'invisible' women in the responses to HIV and AIDS, such as lesbian women, transgender women, sex workers, women drug users and refugee women.

## How?

The 'newsletter' will include a combination of 'features', which will appear in each and every edition, and 'special reports', which are designed to respond to both emerging challenges and debates, such as male circumcision and criminalization of vertical transmission of HIV, and developments and issues arising at AIDS2008.

'Daily features' will include:

- **In Focus...** News from the plenary and main sessions of the conference
- **Feedback from the Global Village...** News from the Global Village
- **News from the 'margins'...** News from satellites and 'side events' of the main conference proceedings, as well as commentaries on issues that are marginalized
- **Women's realities...** A focus on women's rights and global responses to HIV and AIDS
- **Women's voices...** Women's voices on the 'appropriateness' of AIDS2008 in responding to women's HIV realities, needs and risks
- **Regional voices...** Focus on regional initiatives, programs and realities
- **Special report...** Analytical reports on emerging debates and other 'hot topics'
- **In my opinion...** Interviews with global voices in the response to HIV and AIDS

## News from the Global Village...

### All Women, All Rights

The **Women's Networking Zone** is a forum within the Global Village of the 2008 International AIDS Conference in Mexico, where women living with and affected by HIV and AIDS, from all over the world, will come together to share their stories, experiences, and knowledge with each other, and with decision-makers and researchers. Everyone is welcome to participate, talk and engage with women from around the world.

*...In order to truly and meaningfully address the particular needs of women in the response to AIDS, we need to listen to the realities of women's lives. The Women's Networking Zone will be a forum that will vibrate with the richness of women's experiences, and will offer a vibrant demonstration of how different the response can be, when women take the lead.*

*The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS congratulates the Alliance for Gender Justice AIDS 2008 for its leadership in organizing the Women's Zone. We call on all women and men at the Mexico Conference to work together to transform the lessons that will be shared here into concrete action, and by so doing to transform the way we respond to the challenges of the AIDS epidemic.* – Kristan Schoultz, Director of the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS.

With the slogan, **All Women, All Rights**, the Women's Networking Zone is promoting women's leadership in the response to HIV, and calling for the recognition that respect for women's human rights is the best way to prevent new infections among women, improve the quality of life of women and girls living with HIV, and to ensure women's leadership and participation in all aspects of the AIDS response.

## News from the margins... Mmapaseka 'Steve' Letsike

### Ownership of our own women's rights platforms...

It is not about identity crisis, nor clarifying the gender presentations. It is about recognizing the difference and representing the broader voices and rights for all women, including the lesbian women around the globe. Often women's sector discussions, caucuses and conferencing are discriminatory, due to the fact that a certain group of women, who prefer same sex, are neither accommodated nor recognized in topics and debates. Why?

I believe there is a certain level of incompetence amongst many people in dealing and addressing women issues, specifically issues that affect the lives of lesbian women, issues of HIV and AIDS, gender and sexual orientation, and human rights. Although these issues affect *women* the most, interventions to address these often exclude lesbian women.

For instance the South African Constitution, much applauded and celebrated, recognizes the fact that

the dignity of the individual is both an objective that the society must pursue, and is a goal which cannot be separated from the material well-being of that individual. Yet, the sexuality of lesbian women and their relationships have continuously been de-prioritised and trivialized, both in public and scholarly discourses, with limited studies undertaken in these areas. However, contrary to prevailing perceptions, some studies are emerging that suggest that lesbian women do indeed test positive for a number of STIs, including HIV.

Although international studies have shown that identified lesbian women are at low risk, this does not necessarily apply to South African lesbian women, as sexual practices of lesbian women do not make them immune from contracting HIV and other STIs. In addition, high levels of gender-based violence and hate crimes directed at lesbian women, particularly in South African townships, increase their vulnerability to HIV infection.

There also seems to be an implicit assumption that 'overlooking' the protection of human rights will reverse the pandemic. However, the solution to the HIV and AIDS pandemics are not as simple as making

every person test for HIV and disclose their status. The AIDS pandemic is highly complex and requires deep-rooted and long-term societal changes, such as gender equality, freedom of expression, and an end to poverty and hate. Ignoring this in a short-term will only delay reversing the pandemic, cost more money, and, most importantly, more lives.

The fact that lesbian women are often ignored needs to be part of the agenda. There is a need to develop a deeper understanding of lesbian women's realities and needs, in order to alleviate discrimination and all related hatred, and most of all ignorance – increasing lesbian women's HIV risks.

While there is the need to highlight the importance of interventions responding to especially lesbian women's HIV risks and vulnerabilities, there is also the urgent need for women's rights discourses to become more inclusive of lesbian voices.

*'Steve' is the Sexual Health and Rights Coordinator of OUT LGBT Well-Being, South Africa.*

## Women's Realities...

Hilda Esquivel

### HIV Positive Women in Mexico – One Woman's View

Every day the HIV and AIDS epidemic takes on more of a woman's face. The low profile of the problems faced by this sector of the population has repercussions, evidenced in the scarce provisions made for their prevention and care needs.

The situation of Mexican women and the gender inequalities that they face tie Mexican women to the home, unaware of the risks of acquiring HIV, and even when they are aware, they lack the power to insist on condom use. Unfortunately, there is also the real possibility of this request being met by physical or verbal aggression, since women are always at risk of being considered 'promiscuous', or coming across Mexican macho insecurity.

Of the total number of registered cases of AIDS in our country, since

the start of the epidemic in 1983, 82% are men and 17.2% are women. But official figures show that the number of women with AIDS is increasing to one woman for every five men. The mortality rate for women with AIDS increased from 0.4 to 2.8 for every 100 thousand inhabitants. That is to say, in just nine years the number of women dying of AIDS has quintupled.

It is calculated that in Mexico there are about 42 thousand women with HIV – mothers, professionals, widows, mothers of positive children, wives, peasants, women deprived of their freedom, etc.

Also, we have to mention vertical transmission, that is to say, that an infected woman can pass HIV to her baby during pregnancy, during childbirth or whilst breastfeeding. It is very important that pregnant women

are offered confidential HIV testing and counselling with their fully informed consent. Receiving a HIV test result at this point allows for the steps to be taken, which in the majority of cases prevent HIV transmission to the baby.

Another important issue is the right to decide whether or not to get pregnant, despite living with HIV, and even though one's partner is living with the same condition. There is now the possibility of using the technique of 'washing' semen and taking treatment during pregnancy, which can make it possible to have a healthy baby.

Historically, women have been discriminated against, marginalised and assaulted, and in the case of those living with HIV, this makes it more difficult to attend to the problems they face. Fortunately, HIV positive women have started to organise themselves with the aims of improving their life expectancy; improving the quality of prevention and care; improving their quality of life; as well as being present in decision-making arenas that affect their lives.

Invisibility, silence and indifference will end when the brave, convinced and strong women with HIV and those who recognise their vulnerability to it, have their views heard!

*Hilda is the National Representative of the International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW), Mexico*

### Un diálogo sobre mujeres positivas de México

La epidemia de VIH y sida cada día toma más el rostro de mujer. La poca visibilidad de la problemática en este sector de la población repercute en una escasa respuesta a sus necesidades de prevención y atención.

La idiosincrasia de la mujer mexicana y la inequidad de género las han circunscrito al hogar, sin percibir el riesgo de adquirir el VIH, y aun cuando tienen esa conciencia, carecen del poder para exigir el uso del condón. Por desgracia, incluso existe la posibilidad real de que a esta petición la respuesta sea una agresión física o verbal, pues la mujer siempre está bajo la amenaza de ser considerada promiscua o nos topamos con la inseguridad del macho mexicano.

Del total de casos registrados de sida en nuestro país desde el

inicio de la epidemia en 1983, 82% corresponde a hombres y 17.2% a mujeres. Pero las cifras oficiales muestran que los casos de sida en mujeres se incrementan y llegan a una mujer por cada cinco hombres. La tasa de mortalidad por sida en mujeres pasó de 0.4 a 2.8 por cada 100 mil habitantes. Es decir, en tan sólo nueve años se quintuplicó la cifra de mujeres que murieron por sida.

Se calcula que en México existen 42 mil mujeres con VIH: madres de familia, profesionistas, viudas, madres de hijos positivos, esposas, mujeres campesinas, mujeres privadas de la libertad, etcétera.

Asimismo, no se puede dejar de mencionar la transmisión vertical, es decir, que una madre infectada le pasa el VIH a su bebé durante el embarazo, al momento del parto o en la lactancia; es muy importante que a

todas las mujeres embarazadas se les haga una prueba de detección con consentimiento informado, confidencialidad, anonimato y consejería. Un resultado positivo al VIH en ese momento permite tomar las medidas que en la mayoría de los casos impiden la transmisión del VIH al bebé.

Otro asunto importante es el derecho a decidir embarazarse aun cuando vivan con VIH, y a pesar de que su pareja viva en las mismas condiciones, en la actualidad existe la posibilidad de realizar una técnica de lavado de semen más el tratamiento durante el embarazo que hacen posible tener un bebé sano.

Las mujeres han sido históricamente discriminadas, marginadas y violentadas, y en el caso de quienes viven con VIH, esto dificulta atender este problema. Afortunadamente, las mujeres con VIH han empezado a organizarse, teniendo como meta mejorar sus expectativas de vida, las condiciones de prevención y atención, el mejoramiento de su calidad de vida, así como tener presencia en los espacios de toma de decisiones que afecten su vida.

¡La invisibilidad, el silencio y la indiferencia van a acabar cuando las valientes, convencidas y fuertes mujeres con VIH y aquellas que reconocen estar vulnerables ante él hagan escuchar sus voces!

*Hilda es un referente nacional de la Comunidad Internacional de Mujeres que Viven con VIH y SIDA-México.*

## Women's Voices...

### On conference expectations and outcomes...

**Louise Binder, Canada**

I want to move way past *'nothing for us without us'*. I want to move to *'us'* deciding it and being squarely at the centre of it. Sometimes *'us'* are homogenous; and sometimes, *'us'* face intersecting oppressions, such as homophobia or the discrimination faced by women drug users.

We need the *'right women'* at the table, not just anyone at the table. There are discrete solutions. It is not appropriate to expect one woman to speak to all the issues. Women do have a lot of commonality of issues, from gender-based violence to sexual and reproductive rights to reproductive choice. We also have a lot of diversity. I want to see women, in all of our diversity, sitting at the table and at the centre of all the decisions that affect our lives.

**Esther Sheehama, ICW Namibia**

I want to get a lot out of this conference. I want to get results, results that will change the prevalence rate in Southern Africa. I also want to network,

to share ideas with other countries, to get results and actions that are meaningful to people affected and infected. It is the whole globalization aspect – to speak with one voice on the seriousness of HIV and AIDS.

**Cynthia Rothschild, USA**

If we really are going to address all the issues of HIV and violence and gender discrimination as human rights crises, our social movements must be much better at not only talking with, but actually *strategizing with* one another. This is a social change project, and we have to engage in strategies that address HIV exactly that way – through an intersectional, inter-movement social justice approach.

**Vicci Talis, South Africa**

International AIDS conferences have always presented us with an ongoing struggle to have our voices heard – to claiming our spaces beyond the margins of the conference

We need to move beyond this: have our many issues seriously listened

to, our experiences and expertise acknowledged, so that we no longer have to *'fight'* for a space, but can put our energy into *'fighting'* for our rights and improving the lives of women.

**Claire Thiboutot, Canada**

I see great possibilities for grandmothers, sex workers and lesbians to collaborate around violence and rape and to train police around these issues.

**Michaela Clayton, Namibia**

...a growing consensus about the incredibly harmful effect that using the criminal law to address transmission of HIV has on women.

**Siphiwe Hlophe, Swaziland**

I expect that the issues of women are in the global picture; that women agenda's are to be taken up; and that there be a strategy to ensure legal services and property ownership by women.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Criminalization of women for HIV transmission

Tuesday, 5 August, 14:30-16:00, Session Room 2  
Scaling-up HIV Testing and Counseling: A Human Rights and Public Health Imperative

Tuesday, 5 August, 18:30-20:30, SBR7  
Crime and Punishment: Criminalization of HIV

Wednesday, 6 August, 11:00-12:30, Session Room 1  
To Transmit or not to Transmit: Is that Really the Question? Criminalization of HIV Transmission

Wednesday, 6 August, 12:30-14:30, poster WEPE1086  
A bitter irony – demands for the criminalisation of HIV transmission to ensure justice for women. A critical examination of the issues

Wednesday, 6 August, 12:30-14:30, poster WEPE0961  
Can the decriminalization of sex work assist HIV prevention? Female sex workers in San Francisco, California give their opinions, 12:30-14:30

Wednesday, 6 August, 16:30-18:00, Session Room 6  
Criminalization: Why, Where and What are the Alternatives?

Thursday, 7 August, 12:30-14:30, poster THPE0795  
Women and criminalization

Thursday, 7 August, 12:30-14:30, poster THPE0924  
Ante-natal routine offer of testing and criminalisation of vertical transmission – infringements of women's – and children's rights

Abbreviations: SBR – skills-building room;  
WNZ – Women's Networking Zone; GV – Global Village

Neelanjana Mukhia

# Special report:

## Violence against women and HIV: Women won't wait

Around the world today, women and girls in every community confront the devastating effects of gender inequality, violence and discrimination on a daily basis that continues to place them at risk of HIV infection. Not only does violence against women in its myriad of forms hinder the abilities of women and girls to control the circumstances and conditions of their sexual lives, it also increases their chances of contracting HIV. On the flip side of this, while violence against women and girls can lead to HIV transmission, violence also follows infection as HIV positive women and girls become easy targets for discrimination, violence and other human rights violations. HIV positive women are also likely to be targeted for violence and other violations, because of additional layers of discrimination and stigma they face, because they are HIV positive. Gender inequality lies at the heart of each of these, negatively impacting on women's health, well-being, and rights.

### *The waiting must end*

Though some progress has been made in the last year, national and global AIDS responses still have not comprehensively addressed this intersection. Instead, when they have looked at both pandemics, they have failed to capture the dangerous

synergy of the interlinked crises that put the health, lives and rights of women and girls at risk.

Women's movements throughout the world have long advocated for concrete action to promote and protect the human rights of all women – including the rights to be free from violence, coercion, stigma and discrimination, and the right to achieve the highest attainable standard of health, including sexual and reproductive health. The HIV community has also worked to ensure the promotion and protection of rights, with the prioritisation of women's human rights as a response to the gender-specific impact on women and girls of the HIV epidemic. However, this global standard is rarely translated into policy and practice. In the case of the links between violence against women and girls and HIV, resulting in the failure in policy and an abrogation of governments' and donors' accountability to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of all.

### *We already have the answers*

One of the most effective strategies to address the intersection of gender-based violence against women and girls and HIV is to significantly increase the resources directed to gender-sensitive and human rights-

based prevention, treatment, care and support – for both epidemics. Education, including general education, as well as comprehensive sexuality education, is a core feature of effective programming. In addition, training legal, healthcare and educational professionals to recognise and respond appropriately to the signs and symptoms of violence is also an effective strategy.

Approaches that rest on the experiences of women and girls, encourage and engage their participation in decision-making, and emphasize the importance of changing community attitudes to counter gender inequality are key to an inclusive approach, with specific attention to women and girls who are HIV positive. In the end, it is imperative that governments, families and communities combat impunity for violence, eliminate discriminatory laws and ensure efforts to foster gender equality in order to comprehensively respond to both HIV and gender-based violence. As long as gender stereotypes lead to violence or the threat thereof, people will be at risk of the negative spiral of gender inequality, gender-based violence and HIV.

**...experiences of women and girls...their participation in decision-making, and ...changing community attitudes... are key to an inclusive approach...**

### *A dangerous and dysfunctional split*

Funding for programmes that focus on violence against women and girls in connection to HIV remains inadequate and inconsistent. Research conducted as part of the **Women Won't Wait: End HIV & Violence Against Women. Now.** Campaign, entitled *Show Us the Money: Is Violence against Women on the HIV&AIDS funding agenda?*, illustrates the lack of concerted funding efforts aimed at responding to the twin pandemics. In an era of increasing accountability, *Show us the Money*

aims to hold donors responsible to basic health and human rights standards in their policies, programmes, and funding streams.

According to the report, whereas issues around violence against women may be acknowledged in HIV policy documents of major donors, such a focus is often absent from programming on the ground. HIV programme efforts rarely cite violence against women and girls as a major driver and consequence of the disease, nor measure its occurrence statistically. Separate funding streams for each create an ineffective and dysfunctional split in intervention efforts, which do little to address the root causes of

either pandemic. Furthermore, it is almost impossible to track resources targeting their intersection, as none of these donors specifically track their programming for, and funding to, violence eradication efforts within their HIV and AIDS portfolios.

The **Women Won't Wait** campaign in its report *What Gets Measured Matters: 2008* takes stock of significant changes, updates, or revisions to the policies, programmes, and funding streams of the major donors, as presented in *Show Us the Money*. It finds that whereas there are few bright spots in the donor spectrum, overall the programmes and financial

allocations continue to marginalize gender equality and violence against women in their HIV & AIDS strategies. Not only does failure to track (i.e. measure) the end point of funds equal an inability to know where the funding has gone, it also means that measuring impact is nearly impossible.

*Neelanjana is the International Women's Rights Policy and Campaign Coordinator of ActionAid. For more information about the Women Won't Wait campaign, please visit: [www.womenwontwait.org](http://www.womenwontwait.org)*

**...overall the programmes and financial allocations continue to marginalize gender equality and violence against women in their HIV and AIDS strategies...**

## Regional Voices

### Comments from the ground...

#### Patricia Perez, ICW Latina

Patricia Perez, ICW Latina Que las mujeres tenemos el Derecho de participar en la construcción de liderazgo a esta altura del siglo 21 no es un tema de discusión. Pero no es menos cierto que no alcanza con las declaraciones formales y las actitudes 'políticamente correctas' para logarlo. Tampoco es suficiente con que nosotras asumamos discursos en ese sentido. La tarea es un cúmulo de actitudes, discursos y sobre todo acciones en el sentido de consolidar espacios de participación real en la toma de decisiones.

En ICW Latina hemos acuñado un lema que es la guía con la que abrimos cada una de nuestras actividades en los 18 países de la región donde se asientan nuestros Capítulos Nacionales y que es un Principio irrenunciable y una Meta a

construir a diario: 'NADA PARA NOSOTRAS SIN NOSOTRAS'

Esto significa que no aceptamos 'recetas' que hablen de nosotras construidas sin nuestra opinión. Esa es la visión que tenemos sobre nuestro papel en el liderazgo.

#### Nizarindandi Picasso of the Alliance for Gender Justice at AIDS 2008

In Mexico, it is crucial to promote access and respect of women's human rights as part of the national response.

#### Hilda Esquivel, ICW Mexico

Invisibility, silence and indifference will end, when the brave, convinced and strong women with HIV, and those who recognise their vulnerability to it, have their views heard.

## In my opinion...

Mari Jo Vazquez, Chair of the ATHENA Network  
and former chair of ICW

# Mujeres Adelante

Well, in the global response... women's issues are a little bit more on the agenda, and so are positive women's issues a little bit more visible.

As for women's spaces, I remember my first conference in Durban. When I arrived in Durban, I really was high spirited hoping that something important is going to happen at the conference – and it happened, for me; I attended the first Women's Networking Zone. And from that little seed planted in Durban we now have a Women's Networking Zone in Mexico, which is part of global village and the formal conference. This is a very important move forward, because it is the space where women's issues are going to be addressed, be better addressed, addressed in more detail, especially for HIV positive women.

And from Durban we moved to Barcelona and **Mujeres Adelante** and the Barcelona Bill of Rights. And there was a space, where

women were able to participate in the conference, but at the same time, to be themselves and to be able to share, to hear, to make a better use of the conference. Not just the scientifically side of the conference, but also the networking and the sharing of experiences. And what has happen since, I think we have been building on that concept.

So, what I would like to see in Mexico would be a consolidation of a space, where women will have the opportunity to be in a conference, and at the same time to explore spaces for themselves. What I would also like to see happening is creating a strong link between the local work we are doing and the work being done by international women's organisations, working at a global level. I would like this link to be strengthening and become more fluent so that we can work together from one conference to the other, and not only for and during the conference.



...think  
about the  
commonalities  
we have and  
ways to work  
together for the  
future...

Being at the conference is an opportunity to establish links and to promote solidarity among different women's groups. I think that more and more the Women's Networking Zone is going to be attended by many groups of women and it would be very good to take this opportunity to find common goals, and to think about the commonalities we have and ways to work together for the future. And while we have at times very different specific goals, we have many common issues that we can share and work towards together.

Supported by a grant from the Public Health Program  
of the Open Society Institute.

**Editors:** Johanna Kehler [jkeehler@icon.co.za](mailto:jkeehler@icon.co.za)  
E. Tyler Crone [tyler.crone@gmail.com](mailto:tyler.crone@gmail.com)  
Maria de Bruyn [debruynm@ipas.org](mailto:debruynm@ipas.org)

**Photography:** Johanna Kehler [jkeehler@icon.co.za](mailto:jkeehler@icon.co.za)

**DTP Design:** Melissa Smith [melissas1@telkomsa.net](mailto:melissas1@telkomsa.net)

**Printing:** Fedex Kinkos Reforma



ATHENA  
[www.athenanetwork.org](http://www.athenanetwork.org)



AIDS  
LEGAL  
NETWORK

[www.aln.org.za](http://www.aln.org.za)