



# STRATEGIC PLAN

ICW-NA

2016 - 2019

ICWNA



INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF  
WOMEN LIVING WITH HIV  
NORTH AMERICA

**December 2015**

**International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS – North America ( ICW-NA)**

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## A BRIEF

# HISTORY OF ICW

In 1991, an international meeting of the Global Network of People living with HIV/AIDS (GNP+) took place in London, UK. At that time it was a gathering predominantly for and about men. The world wrongly assumed then that HIV would only touch men who had sex with other men.

Women were excluded from the discussions and the decision-making process at the time. Each of the women who attended the meeting in London had their own stories to tell, their own questions, fears and uncertainties. They came from different countries, spoke different languages, and belonged to different cultures. Despite this, nothing prevented them from understanding one another and the exclusion they felt from the HIV movement at the time.

This meeting convinced the women that they needed to mobilize. This was the first time that a group of women came together and used a gender perspective to challenge patriarchy and understand their place in the epidemic. The International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW) was formally unveiled at the International AIDS Conference held in Amsterdam in 1992.

Geographic distance, language, and lack of resources led to many cases of burn out and fatigue during ICW's growth. Since that time, ICW has grown, struggled and re-emerged like the proverbial phoenix to include many powerful voices.

***“The International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW) was formally unveiled at the International AIDS Conference held in Amsterdam in 1992.”***

The International Support Office (ISO) was originally established in London, UK, to coordinate the network, seek resources and create policy documents the women could use to advocate for change. ICW created governance structures to organize and support the network, including the International Steering Committee (ISC).

The ISO supported the development and growth of regional and national ICW chapters to address the diverse and specific issues of women in each region. In 2009, the ISC made a decision to move the ISO to Buenos Aires, Argentina. The transition caused some struggles within ICW, not uncommon among networks as they develop. Despite the challenges, new chapters of ICW emerged and asked for support to organize. This included the development of the ICW Chapter for Young Women, Adolescents and Girls (CYWAG), ably led by a small group of young women.

In 2013, the ISC made a decision to move the Global Office (formerly ISO) to its permanent home in Nairobi, Kenya, where it has been operating since March 2014.

With confidence in the resiliency of ICW re-established, growth in the regions has followed, including ICW Asia Pacific and the launch of the Central African region.



## A BRIEF

# HISTORY OF ICW-NA

The North American Region of ICW was founded when women living with HIV in Canada and the US realized that they were being excluded from the larger conversation. These women fully supported their sisters in the south, however, they believed that their voices were equally important and their needs, while sometimes different, were vital to their survival and well-being.

ICW-NA was formally incorporated in 2009. Through 2014, a dedicated group of volunteers worked to establish the collective voice of women living with HIV in Canada and the United States. Work has been completed on the development of a Concept Note, Conflict of Interest Statement and draft By-Laws. Efforts to grow the membership were recognized with funding

from the Robert Carr Network Fund (RCNF) for the years 2014-2015. ICW-NA expects to receive its charitable status in 2016 along with renewed funding from RCNF.

*“ICW-NA exists to serve the needs of all women living with HIV in Canada and the United States of America.”*

ICW-NA exists to serve the needs of all women living with HIV in Canada and the United States. This includes a disproportionate number of women who may be marginalized or underserve due to gender status, ethnicity, power imbalance in relationships, cycles of violence and abuse, addictions, poverty and lack of access to safe and appropriate services. ICW-NA stands ready to take its place among the regional chapters and reaffirm the role it plays on behalf of women living with HIV in the region with a strong focus on the particular challenges they face.

# OUR PROCESS

Working with a local community consultant and ally living with HIV, ICW-NA undertook the development of a new 3-year strategic plan during a recent face to face retreat held in Toronto, Canada, on the weekend of December 3, 2015. In preparation for the meeting, an environmental scan was conducted by online questionnaire sent to ICW-NA members in the region, seeking input on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the current landscape. The survey was presented to some 50 members in attendance in Toronto and further comments were incorporated. This formed the basis for discussion and development of a new strategic plan led by current and new Board Members.

## ICW-NA VISION

ICW-NA envisions a world where all women living with HIV live free of gender oppression, realizing and claiming our full rights inclusive of sexual, reproductive, legal, social, economic and health rights.

## ICW-NA MISSION

ICW-NA exists to lead efforts to secure and improve the quality of life for women living with HIV in Canada and the United States. We do this by mobilizing, organizing, advocating, mentoring and raising consciousness on the issues and policies that directly impact our lives.

# CORE VALUES & PRINCIPLES

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

We answer to the members of our network and the women living with HIV whose interests we serve

## **SELF DETERMINATION AND EMANCIPATION**

We promote and practice the principles of GIPA/MEWA (Greater Involvement of People with AIDS/Meaningful Engagement of Women with HIV and AIDS)

## **INTEGRITY AND CRITICAL REFLECTION**

We are committed to working in a way that is transparent to our members and that builds our capacity to put the needs of women living with HIV above individual interests

## **FEMINISMS AND GENDER EQUALITY**

We work to support the ability of all women living with HIV to define, establish and achieve equal political, economic, cultural, personal and social rights

## **SOCIAL JUSTICE**

We recognize that as with all people, we share a common humanity and therefore a right to equitable treatment, support for our human rights, and a fair allocation of community resources.

## **COMMITMENT TO ADVOCACY**

We are committed to improving health and social policies that increase fairness and access for all women living with HIV

## **SELF CARE**

In doing our work with its many demands, we commit to care for ourselves as we offer care and support to each other



# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

# 1

## **We will educate and equip women living with HIV with skills and tools to improve policies that affect our health and well-being.**

The goals of ICW-NA are closely linked to the broader goals outlined in the global strategy of ICW. These goals include: creating space and spaces for women to tell their stories and share their experiences; increasing the active engagement of existing ICW members, with a focus on attracting young women; and implementing effective campaigns that reflect our issues. Guided by a commitment to principles of social justice, we work to secure the human rights of women living with HIV and their families, and to hold governments and institutions to account.

### **TO ACHIEVE OUR GOALS, WE WILL**

- **Develop briefs to inform public policy** on the following issues and others that may arise:

Criminalization for failure to disclose one's HIV status

Violence against women and girls living with HIV

Sexual and reproductive health and rights

- **Support, educate and share knowledge** among women living with HIV through:

In person workshops and retreats

Presentations at local, regional and international meetings

Webinars hosted with relevant partners to connect women living in and beyond urban centers, to build awareness of major policy initiatives and improve access to services in the region

- **Promote and support gender specific research** that:

Provides evidence to support policy work to improve health and social conditions

Ensures more research is led by women and about women living with HIV

Develops the capacity of women to participate actively in all aspects of research

Provide active input into research development and knowledge translation to the communities of women we serve

- **Ensure representation of women living with HIV** at national and international tables where issues that concern us are being discussed, such as:

UNAIDS

UN WOMEN

PEPFAR and the Global Fund

IAS Conferences

# 2

## **We will strengthen and grow the capacity of ICW-NA to mount an equitable and effective response to the HIV epidemic.**

We recognize that in order to achieve our goals in Canada and the United States, and as part of the ICW global network, ICW-NA must continue to grow and develop its governance and operational capacity in order to be a strong voice for the issues affecting women living with HIV. We have listened to the many members who told us that organizational weakness, related to recent restructuring, must be overcome in order to ensure our voice remains strong and our collective issues are heard and acted upon.

### **TO ACHIEVE OUR GOALS, WE WILL**

- **Build on existing and develop new working relationships:**

We will develop written agreements to build on partnerships and collaborations

We will join larger coalitions of stakeholders focused on issues of mutual interest and concern

- **Review and update our operational and procedural policies** to ensure we are working in an efficient, fair and transparent manner

- **Develop the skills of our Board** using a Working Board/Administrative governance model

- **Commit to evaluate progress on achieving our goals on an annual basis**
- **Raise the awareness and visibility of ICW-NA** through the development of a communications strategy that allows us to inform and consult our members, and that includes:

Judicious use of social media that is sensitive to issues of confidentiality

Regular publication and dissemination of a newsletter to members

Growing our membership, strengthening our collective voice

# 3

## **We will ensure the sustainability and future growth of ICW-NA through diversified funding**

We recognize the limitations placed on our ability to grow as an organization and are mindful of the need to reduce our reliance on a sole funder. During our environmental scan, members and other stakeholders mentioned this as the most significant threat to future growth. The ability of ICW-NA to seek other sources of funding will be enhanced by achieving charitable status as expected in 2016. We will then be well placed to look for additional funding.

### **TO ACHIEVE OUR GOALS, WE WILL**

- **Create a fund development strategy** that will enable us to pursue increased opportunities with:

Individual donors

Relevant Foundations such as Elton John, M.A.C. AIDS Fund and the Gates Foundation

AIDS UNITED (USA)

Unrestricted grants from the pharmaceutical industry

# APPENDIX

# ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
<b>CYWAG</b>	Chapter for Young Women Adolescent and Girls
<b>GIPA</b>	Greater Involvement of People with AIDS
<b>GNP+</b>	Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>IAS</b>	International AIDS Society
<b>ICW</b>	International Community of Women Living with HIV
<b>ICW-NA</b>	International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS – North America
<b>ISC</b>	International Steering Committee
<b>ISO</b>	International Support Office
<b>MEWA</b>	Meaningful Engagement of Women with HIV and AIDS
<b>PEPFAR</b>	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
<b>RCNF</b>	Robert Carr Network Fund
<b>UNAIDS</b>	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
<b>UNWOMEN</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women