

INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN

For 2003 to 2007

This strategy stems from a review of ten years of ICW work in 2002. It was developed by 14 active members of ICW's international membership who met in Pretoria in January 2003. Participants were from Asia/Pacific, Africa, North and South America, and Europe. They included trustees, regional and country contacts, other volunteers and staff. It is they who developed ICW's international strategic plan for the period 2003 to 2007; a strategy that sets out ICW's vision, purpose, values and goals for this period. This strategy renews ICW's commitment to organise and work in ways that will ensure that the rights of all HIV positive women are met.



ICW's Vision is:

A world where all HIV positive women:

- Have a respected and meaningful **involvement** at all political levels, local, national, regional, and international, where decisions that affect their lives are being made;
- Have full **access** to care and treatment; and
- Enjoy full **rights**, particularly sexual, reproductive, legal, financial and general health rights;

irrespective of our culture, age, religion, sexuality, social or economic status/class and race.



ICW's Purpose:

ICW is an international **network** run for and by HIV positive women that promotes all our **voices** and **advocates** for changes that improve our lives.



ICW's Values are:

- **Mutual Respect, Honesty, Integrity and Confidentiality:** As a network of women living with HIV throughout the world, ICW is based on the mutual respect, honesty and integrity of its members, as well as on the assurance of confidentiality.
- **Commitment to advocacy:** Ensuring that women living with HIV have a voice and meaningful participation in relevant decision and policy-making bodies on issues important to our lives.
- **Accountability:** ICW and its policies should aim to be for the benefit of all members regardless of culture, age, religion, sexuality, social or economic status/class and race. ICW must be accountable to our members for our actions, use of funds, and for fulfilling any of our legal obligations.
- **Self-determination:** ICW values the transformative power of women living self-determined lives. Such action is essential to attainment of all of our

human rights. We value peer support and mentoring as ways to enable our peers to become more self-determined in their lives.

The External Realities¹

- Women now account for over 50% of global infections
- There are at least 19.2 million women around the world who are living with HIV/AIDS
- In 2002, more than 1.2 million women died as a result of HIV infection
- The number of children infected continues to expand
- In some places, girls are the fastest growing group of people newly infected and may outnumber their male counterparts 2 to 1
- Gender violence and inequalities increase the levels of poverty, stigma, discrimination, oppression and isolation experienced by HIV positive women.

It is the neglect of HIV positive women's issues in all parts of the world that has very much kept ICW alive as the only international network run by and for HIV positive women. Currently we have 2000 members living in 90 countries around the world. ICW's organisational achievements include:

- Creating a sense of solidarity between women living with HIV/AIDS
- Giving HIV positive women a unified voice in policy forums by working with them on issues of concern before and during conferences
- Ensuring HIV positive women speak at major HIV/AIDS conferences by co-organising such events and ensuring women have the opportunity to speak
- Providing training for positive women's empowerment in Africa and Latin America that is inspired, planned and run by positive women for positive women
- Providing skills building workshops at conferences for instance in sexual and reproductive rights and microbicides
- Completing participatory research into HIV positive women's concerns and needs around reproductive and sexual health
- Producing written resources inspired by HIV positive women, incorporating their voices, for other HIV positive women
- Establishing an organisational structure and relationships between HIV positive women that reach out to HIV positive women at local levels.

This strategy seeks to build on these achievements and address the key challenges we face. These include:

- Articulating a clear vision and positions on the issues of most concern to HIV positive women
- Maintaining effective communication processes across the network and with external agencies
- Organising ourselves in ways that take advantage of our main resource. This is the voluntary work that so many members are willing to contribute to the network
- Defining specific priorities that can be achieved with the few staff and scarce financial resources available to the network.

¹ Sources: UNAIDS/WHO AIDS epidemic update: December 2002 and Feinstein and Prentice: Gender and AIDS Almanac, UNAIDS: 2002, available on line
<http://www.unaids.org/gender/docs/Gender%20Package/GenderandAIDSAlmanac.pdf>

As we address these challenges, we strongly believe that ICW will position itself to more effectively bring together our collective knowledge and skills so that we can recommend strategies and activities that are relevant to the growing number of women faced with the epidemic.

1. What ICW wants to achieve by 2007

Our purpose translates into three interrelated and mutually reinforcing goals. Indeed success related to achievement in one goal will enable achievement in others. A crosscutting area of work in these goals will be a focus on HIV positive young women and the issues of concern to them. Detailed action plans that describe how the objectives and activities under each goal will be achieved are being developed.

Goal 1: Strengthening the network and the regions

First, we must build the network so that we are working closely with enough HIV positive women across the globe to be considered a legitimate organised force that represents the voice of HIV positive women. The way the network is strengthened from local to international level aims to enable HIV positive women to identify and articulate common issues of greatest concern to them and advocate ways such issues can be addressed to policy makers at local, national and international levels.

Objective 1.1: Increase accountability to ICW's members

Objective 1.2: Increase the legitimacy of the network

Expected Outcomes from work to strengthen the network:

- Increased number of members in ICW, particularly young positive women
- Increased number of members who actively engage in the network and promote the rights of HIV positive women including regional and country contacts
- Increase the number of leaders and representatives through a democratic process (when implemented)
- More effective coordinating office serving the needs of the members.

Goal 2: Advocating for improvements in the availability and accessibility of care and treatment services for HIV positive women

There are numerous issues confronting HIV positive women. While many issues are important, it would be naïve for ICW to think it could advocate for change on all issues of concern to HIV positive women at once.

Given the disparity in care and treatment options for women across the globe and the great difference improvements in care and treatment make to HIV positive women's lives, ICW will in the first instance focus on carrying out advocacy work on care and treatment issues of greatest concern to members, with a position paper on anti-retro virals to be drafted by January 2004. Other position papers and strategies that represent the interests of the wider membership and encourage HIV positive women to advocate on their behalf will be developed following the processes described below.

Objective 2.1: Issues of most concern to HIV positive women will become part of the agendas/debates of key decision-making bodies. A cross-regional working group of 6 members has agreed to take responsibility for ensuring that clear priorities for the work at the international level on advocacy are set and that the work is then planned and carried out. One member of the group has agreed to assume leadership responsibility for the group.

Expected outcomes from work on advocacy:

- More HIV positive women will engage in policy advocacy debates of concern to them and advocate for changes that will improve their situation
- More issues of concern to HIV positive women become part of the agenda/debates of key decision making bodies
- ICW is working as part of larger alliances to promote its advocacy agenda at national, regional and international levels.

Goal 3: Communicating information across the ICW network that promotes achievement of ICW's advocacy and networking goals

Establishing and maintaining cost effective communication links across the network will be critical for building a global network of HIV positive women that can coordinate action for specific social and policy change and encourage HIV positive women to advocate on their own behalf. Sharing of information across the network is also important for building the confidence of HIV positive women and reducing their sense of isolation.

Objective 3.1: HIV positive women feel more connected to other HIV positive women and more informed of their rights Though there are many members and friends of ICW willing to work voluntarily on the activities described below, funding will be needed to cover a number of costs i.e. the publication of the newsletter. The level of activity completed will depend on funds that can be raised.

Expected Outcomes from work on communicating information:

- Greater and more informed awareness of the issues confronting HIV positive women across the ICW membership.
- Coherence of advocacy positions taken by ICW on behalf of the membership.
- Establishment of other forms of media that encourage HIV positive women that have limited access to internet and word literacy to participate in the network.
- Increased number of members in ICW, particularly young positive women.

2. What are the implications and assumptions

Achievement of ICW's goals will strengthen the links between HIV positive women globally and enable them to advocate on common concerns and on their own behalf. The act of advocating collectively will both increase individual women's abilities to engage decision

makers at every level, but will strengthen the ability of this group to speak out on behalf of all women living with HIV in order to fight global gender disparities. This is however an ambitious strategy for the network as it relies on many HIV positive women to voluntarily give their time and energy to this movement. Indeed the level of activity described above will very much depend on the numbers of HIV positive women who decide to actively do some work with the network.

3.1 Financial Implications

While the ICW members that prepared this strategy focused on identifying low cost options to achieving results, there are core costs that need to be covered so that the work can happen. These are prioritized below by goal. Based on this strategy trustees will ensure that a **fundraising strategy** is developed in the first part of 2003 so that appropriate and sufficient income can be raised to implement the activities described in this plan. The importance of devising and implementing a fundraising strategy that will systematically ensure that funds are available as described below cannot be stressed enough as it is only with such funding that ICW members can successfully implement the plan.

Goal 1: Strengthening the network and regions

- a) Communication and *translation* costs so that all members can equally participate in the international board and participate in at least one annual meeting together.
- b) Regional workshop costs so that HIV positive women can meet and discuss the most appropriate structures and strategies for working together in their regions and ways to encourage other women to join ICW.
- c) Coordination office costs (i.e. coordinator and finance/admin post(s)).

Goal 2: Advocating on care and treatment issues

- a) Funds to enable HIV positive women to participate in relevant conferences.
- b) Funds to cover the cost of running focus groups and workshops for HIV positive women at conferences.
- c) Funds to enable background research on relevant issues and to represent the views of ICW at appropriate forums (i.e. an advocacy staff person post).
- d) Funds to publish positions and brief research papers.
- e) Funds for *translation* costs at each stage of this process.

Goal 3: Communicating information to members

- a) Publication of quarterly newsletter.
- b) Website design and updating.
- c) Survival Kit updating.
- d) Database improvement, maintenance and software (this is essential for newsletter distribution and verifying membership levels by region and country)
- e) Funds to cover a communications and database manager, who will be responsible for the membership database, the website and coordinate other information activities.
- f) Funds for translation costs for each of these.

3.2 Monitoring and Evaluation

The strategy defines specific objectives, activities and expected outcomes that can be monitored and evaluated overtime. Processes that are simple to administer will be used. This will include a one-day annual review and reflection session held by staff and trustees to assess progress and make adjustments as necessary to the strategy. In addition, a mid term review process will be carried out in 2005 and the views of a wider sample of the

membership sought. Based on the findings from the mid-term review, the strategy will be adapted accordingly. Trustees will ensure that such review and evaluation processes take place so that ICW can be accountable to both its members and to the donors who support its work.

3.3 Major Assumptions

In order to succeed, we know that the following assumptions will need to happen:

- That an increasing number of HIV positive women will need to actively engage in the network and the work as set out in the plan.
- That donors will recognize that even networks, where large amounts of work is voluntarily done by members, require income to cover their core costs and provide funds accordingly.
- That donors and governments will continue to recognize the importance of involving HIV positive people in policy debates and formulation processes and welcome our participation in defining relevant policies and practice.

4. Conclusion

Every aspect of the strategy is interrelated and interlinked at every level – goal, objective and activity levels - with many of the activities contributing to achievement of all of the goals. The strategy is pitched to provide broad strategic direction to all ICW members wherever they live. However, it leaves space for them to contextualize, elaborate and operationalize what they do on behalf of ICW based on their regional context and needs. It is meant to inspire HIV positive women to act and create a world where ICW's vision becomes a reality as well as to encourage others to work with us in building a world where all women can live a life of dignity.