



# THE AIDS SUPPORT ORGANISATION (TASO)



## Stand Out and be Counted to Support Women Living with HIV

Uganda, as the rest of the world today honors International Women's Day to reflect on the journey we have moved to recognize the critical role of women in realising a fairer world. Our reflection on the day will not be complete without us appreciating the intricate lives and livelihoods of Women Living with HIV.

The HIV epidemic in Uganda continues to disproportionately affect women and thereby hindering progress in the attainment of gender parity and development goals. These are the hard facts; HIV prevalence is higher in women than for men, there are more new HIV infections in women than in men with the number much higher in young women aged between 15 and 24 years than young men in the same age bracket; the burden of care at family and community squarely rests on women. Related issues to these facts include gender-based violence (including sexual abuse), lack of access to information and education, health services, social protection and productive resources to cope with these unfortunate inequities and injustices.

In 2016 leaders across the world pledged to take action as champions of gender parity. Various institutions, groups and individuals also pledged their support and in Uganda, our current leadership slogan is 'steady progress'. These commitments will only make meaning if we are bold for change and care for Women Living with HIV in our conversations and practical actions. We should thus interest ourselves **on causes and dynamics of delayed access, uptake and retention of women in HIV prevention, care and treatment** and other health care as well as socio-economic development interventions.

Since inception, TASO has maintained its mission of contributing to the process of preventing HIV infection, restoring hope and improving the quality of life of persons, families and communities affected by HIV and disease. Women remain an important segment of the population in the TASO response. Over the period, TASO has supported a network of over 100 community based initiatives with over 6,000 volunteers who are mobilizing citizens and engaging with leadership in the HIV and AIDS response and challenging practices that are harmful to the dignity and wellbeing of women.

The TASO Community-led practice models have been documented as one of the most successful approaches to community mobilization and response in Uganda. These models contributed greatly to the development of Uganda's Village Health Team (VHT) strategy. These models promote individual and group participation and encourage adoption and sustenance of positive behavior change that enhances the wellbeing of women.

We recognize the growing informality of labour, insecure livelihoods and incomes as well as judgmental clauses in our laws, continue to constrain women's empowerment at family, community and national level. It is thus important to recognize women's unpaid care labour, domestic work and addressing the gender gaps in resource ownership, leadership and entrepreneurship. Access to quality health care services including HIV prevention, care and treatment is a must for us to ensure attainment of universal health and development goals, including ending of the HIV epidemic. Our policies and practices must demonstrate overwhelming support and protection for women in the households, community, informal economy and other work places to better harness their potential to make this world a better place to live in.

The empowerment of women should not be limited to education for all and small handouts but to transcend every aspect of human life and development including access and control of productive resources. It must involve saving and protecting life of the person of a woman and girl child from health challenges including HIV and AIDS. The country and world needs them alive and healthy so that they can make the best of their potential in transforming the world into a better place. Let us all therefore support every Women Living with HIV and we shall accelerate the end of the HIV epidemic and attainment of the sustainable development goals.

TASO greatly appreciates all the partners, subscriber members and friends who have supported us in our work over the past years. We count on you all joining hands to continue with the journey so we can soon celebrate gender parity and a world without HIV and AIDS

***Wishing us all a happy International Women's Day***  
**TASO Management, 8th March 2017.**

