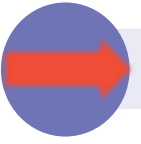


“It's COVID's fault!”: How has COVID-19 affected the SRHR of women living with HIV in East and Southern Africa?

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OBJECTIVES

To explore [sexual and reproductive health and rights](#) how COVID-19 has affected (SRHR) of women and girls living with HIV in East and Southern Africa



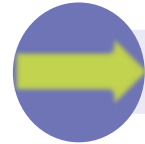
METHODS

We conducted [collaborative research](#) in October 2020 on the effects of COVID-19 lockdown on the SRHR of women and girls living with HIV with 30 women across 10 countries of East and Southern Africa. We used a cascade interview approach.



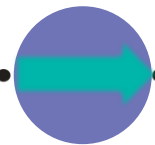
RESULTS

The ongoing chronic but largely invisible pandemics of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) violations, violence against women and girls (VAWG), and mental health challenges have worsened through COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. Respondents identified gaps including income; food security; funds for their ongoing volunteer distribution of medication, contraceptives, support and other vital services unrecognised by governments or NGOs (when employed community health workers were withdrawn); funds for VAW reduction or mitigation services; gendered digital access (smartphones and airtime). Further challenges including increased incest from family members, and other SRHR violations; and lack of law enforcement or legal redress. These have combined to increase women's and girls' vulnerabilities to (other) STIs, unplanned pregnancies; and onward HIV transmissions.



CONCLUSIONS

The COVID pandemic presents a critical opportunity for FIGO to embrace a [syndemic approach](#) to girls' and women's lifelong SRH care, by addressing the pandemics of SRHR violations, violence against women and girls, and mental health, as well as HIV and COVID-19 themselves. This is because all these conditions separately and together, and exacerbated by each other, contribute significantly to the global burden of SRH disease.



[\(Click to read more\)](#)

- Why a syndemic approach?
- Why 'collaborative research'?
- What can be done to improve women's SRHR and gender equity to prepare for future pandemics?



OUR VOICES

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON WOMEN AND GIRLS' HEALTH AND RIGHTS

OUR CALL FOR ACTION TO DONORS, NGOS AND GOVERNMENTS



Urgently support the vital work of women and girls in their communities



Uphold our SRHR as essential – even in a pandemic!



Ensure everyone has enough to eat, and women and girls living with HIV do not have to take ARVs on an empty stomach



Ensure COVID-19 responses respect privacy and confidentiality for women and girls living with HIV



COVID-19 responses must address and prevent violence against women and girls



Our digital inclusion is vital – but make sure you meet our other priorities too!



Provide flexible, creative, accessible funding for organisations led by women and girls during and beyond this COVID-19 crisis



FURTHER READING

<https://tinyurl.com/SalamanderTrustCOVIDEffects>

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