



**#WhatWomenWant consultation and accountability process with Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW), to review UNAIDS guidance *HIV prevention among adolescent girls and young women: Putting HIV prevention among adolescent girls and young women on the Fast-Track***

Submitted as an example of Effective Accountability Mechanisms at all levels, with a Focus on Adolescents.

Our consultation and participatory accountability process, #WhatWomenWant, engaged adolescent girls and young women across East and Southern Africa (with a focus on Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Malawi) to review new prevention guidance from UNAIDS. The evidence we are submitting is a report including primary research findings from this process as well as an evaluation of activities, titled *#WhatWomenWant: HIV prevention that works for adolescent girls and young women* ([http://athenanetwork.org/assets/files/WhatWomenWant/ATHENA%20WhatWomenWant\\_AGYW%20powering%20HIV%20prevention\\_2017.pdf](http://athenanetwork.org/assets/files/WhatWomenWant/ATHENA%20WhatWomenWant_AGYW%20powering%20HIV%20prevention_2017.pdf)). It reports on a process led by ATHENA from February to March 2017.

**Highlights:** this project utilised new social media to engage AGYW in responding to UNAIDS HIV prevention guidance, reviewing and reacting to the strategies outlined in the guidance, engaging directly with implementers and decision-makers, identifying barriers and challenges, and articulating solutions to these rooted in their lived experience, professional knowledge, and community understanding. The methodology included an extended focus group discussion conducted using WhatsApp, a working group, informational webinar, bringing policy-makers into direct dialogue with AGYW through social media, and advocacy through Twitter and other social media. 185 young women from at least nine different countries participated in a focus group through WhatsApp, responding directly to the UNAIDS guidance and providing rich, insightful feedback on what was needed to ensure these strategies were implemented effectively for AGYW. The full findings of this research are explored in the report.

The project also created platforms for direct accountability with policy and programme leads. 56 AGYW participated in a virtual dialogue with UNAIDS Zimbabwe using a WhatsApp group created for that purpose. Staff members from UNAIDS Zimbabwe participated, providing updates on current and upcoming activities and priorities, and AGYW were invited to comment and feedback on these, ask questions and make recommendations. This direct engagements with decision makers was a key arm of the project in ensuring that AGYW were able to directly influence the implementation of HIV prevention. The opportunity to engage directly with UNAIDS staff allowed AGYW to identify their priorities, ask questions, and influence strategy and implementation. UNAIDS Zimbabwe staff provided insights into their programming and policies at country level, and engaged in the discussion effectively. This model could be easily replicated in different settings, with policymakers and programmers from government, multinational bodies, NGOs, and the private sector.

**Analysis, results, and lessons learned:** A key finding in relation to the methods used in this project is the potential of WhatsApp as a research, engagement, and accountability tool. We had not anticipated at the outset of this project how successful this tool would be, in engaging AGYW and generating meaningful qualitative data. We conclude that WhatsApp offers significant opportunities for consultation and accountability, that are not yet fully explored or realised. By using and adapting tools that AGYW already use, where they feel comfortable, understand the technical elements of engagement, we found we could create a safe, supportive, and active research encounter, which mimicked many of the elements expected of face-to-face qualitative research but with significantly less restrictions in terms of numbers of participants, and time and resources required to participate. In addition, WhatsApp contrasts with other more commonly used tools such as Webinars in that it uses very little data and requires no Wi-Fi access or programme downloads, so is more accessible to a wider range of AGYW. Our use of WhatsApp builds on our past work developing groups for participants at events such as conferences, but demonstrates the potential to build from practical discussions to research.

**Recommendations:** Through this process, we have engaged hundreds of adolescent girls and young women, across countries and communities, through different tools and platforms, to inform them about the UNAIDS HIV prevention guidance, to consult them about their values, preferences, and experiences of HIV prevention, and to engage them in direct accountability and advocacy. Through this, we have demonstrated the potential to engage AGYW in real time through direct accountability processes using WhatsApp or other new social media platforms which are accessible and familiar to AGYW. The process would be simple to replicate in other settings, and provides an avenue to reach larger numbers of AGYW including those who face time or access barriers to participating in face-to-face accountability processes.