

# **AfNHi Update Report**

**2019/2020**

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### **Contacts**

AfNHi Secretariat

WACI Health

Lang'ata Road, Dam Estate, 233

Nairobi, Kenya



[Afnhi@afnhi.org](mailto:Afnhi@afnhi.org)



[@AfNHi\\_Tweets](https://twitter.com/AfNHi_Tweets)



[afnhi](https://www.facebook.com/afnhi)



<http://afnhi.org/>

# Forward

This year's AfNHi report comes amid challenging time in the world occasioned by COVID-19 making our continued advocacy work more complex but very much needed. The pandemic has further weakened the already overstretched health systems, increasingly putting our gains in HIV prevention at great risk. With weak health systems and scarce financial resources for biomedical HIV prevention research we stand a greater risk of reversing gains made over the years.

This report is a testament to AfNHi's continued commitment in calling for the urgent implementation of proven biomedical HIV prevention strategies as well as development of additional tools in order to expand available options.

Our advocacy goes beyond biomedical discovery to include health system strengthening for the roll out of products and scale up to cover everyone who needs the products while ensuring equitable access by all regardless of ability to pay.

In the coming months, AfNHi will continue to play her role towards visible civil society voice and action in HIV Prevention research advocacy in Africa.

We look forward to continued partnerships with you all.

Onward!

**Ms. Joyce Ng'ang'a**

**AfNHi coordinator**

# Tribute

Celebrating 'Papa' Manasseh.

A personal tribute by Rosemary Mburu- Executive Director, WACI Health

About 6 years ago, my path crossed that of a person I would later refer to as friend, colleague, mentor, fierce advocate. I met Dr Manasseh Phiri at a HIV prevention research advocacy meeting in Zimbabwe. We were co-panelists, responding to the question 'what keeps you awake at night', in the context of HIV prevention work. He would go on to speak about Nicholas, his grandson, and his hope that Nicholas would live in a society where HIV would no longer be an epidemic. No stigma. No discrimination. A world with equitable health services.

The following year, in Johannesburg, we would co-facilitate a session on 'HIV Prevention Research in Africa'. He was a firm believer that Africa's research agenda should be set and driven by Africa. This session would aid in cementing previous conversations on the need for an African-led HIV prevention research advocacy network.

In the years that would follow, I was honoured and privileged to work side by side with Papa, (as we fondly referred to him), as my co-coordinator in advancing the concept of an African-led HIV prevention research advocacy. Papa's passion, tenacity and conviction in this agenda and process was unmatched. This process would lead to the network we now know as Africa Free of New HIV Infections (AfnHi), where Papa diligently served as a founding member of the Steering Committee until his last.

In February 2018, in Johannesburg, i was once again honoured and grateful to share the floor with Papa as we were both speakers during the Africa regional session at AVAC partners meeting, presenting the work of @AfnHi. During this trip, too, Papa gave us, his colleagues, the opportunity to meet his loving and supportive spouse Chilufya Mwaba Phiri. A strong woman with a kind and generous spirit and who, according to Papa, has been his strongest pillar in life.

Like many other AfnHi colleagues, I remain grateful to have learnt so, so much from Papa. He had a beautiful soul. He loved people. Great sense of humour. A hearty laughter. A Kind person. I was honoured to benefit from his wisdom and positivity in life.

Continue resting in power, Papa Manasseh.



'Papa' Manasseh.

## About AfNHi

Africa Free of New HIV Infections (AfNHi) is an Africa regional advocacy network which exists to unite African Civil Society voices and action on regional advocacy for HIV prevention research. AfNHi is committed to influencing Africa regional policies in order to accelerate ethical development and delivery of HIV prevention tools towards ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030. The network seeks to fast-track the biomedical HIV prevention research agenda on the continent through local ownership, using indigenous strategies to enhance Africa's contribution to the Global goals.

## Our Gratitude

**Community and civil society advocates:** Our first set of gratitude goes to all civil society and community advocates who make it possible for AfNHi to organize and engage. AfNHi's work is our joint accomplishment and most pointedly the triumph of communities in need of HIV prevention options.

**AfNHi Steering Committee Members:** A huge appreciation to [AfNHi steering committee](#) members for their consistent support, guidance and leadership. A shout out to outgoing Steering committee members: Morenike Ukpong and Sydney Hushie. A warm welcome to new steering committee members: Georgina Caswell, Evelyn Adhiambo and Florita Durueke.

**Partners:** All those who have partnered with AfNHi through financial and technical support including support for BHPF.

# Top line messages:

## AfNHi's top line messages include:

- 1 There still is an urgent need to find a vaccine against HIV given the rates of new infections being experienced in Africa. Adolescent girls and young women in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, are as high as 4 percent per year.<sup>1</sup> We acknowledge progress, which has led to highly effective treatment, and proven prevention methods such as Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis. Even with that, most recent data show an estimated 1.7 million people around the world still became newly infected with HIV in 2018.<sup>2</sup> A vaccine is needed for a durable and sustainable end of the HIV epidemic.
- 2 As outlined in AfNHi's statement in response to HVTN 702, the development of a HIV vaccine is a long yet important process. It therefore requires continued political will for significant investments in order to advance the science.
- 3 African governments should increase domestic budgetary allocations in strengthening Africa's health systems, research capacity and infrastructure not only in support of African scientists who are dedicated to finding an HIV vaccine but also in ensuring health systems are strengthened so that when a vaccine is found there is fair distribution.
- 4 Amid the COVID crisis, HIV vaccine research must be safeguarded and we must also not lose sight of the important contributions of HIV R&D to the search for a COVID-19 vaccine. Techniques and platforms developed through HIV vaccine research on virus structure and immune responses have greatly helped in advancing understanding of COVID-19.
- 5 In the same way, HIV research has created a foundation for ethical considerations in research, which COVID-19 vaccine development should learn from. HIV research has shown that greater success is achieved when strong community participation is in place. It is a basis to build acceptance, mutual support and trust for ethically rigorous research process and respect for humanity.
- 6 Young people should be fully engaged and in the lead of HIV Prevention programmes and interventions targeting them. Young people's meaningful participation in decision making that affects their lives is a human right. Meaningful youth participation doesn't just happen organically. It should be planned and formalized in advocacy strategies.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)31288-7/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)31288-7/fulltext)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/fact-sheet>

# A peek at some of our activities:

## AfNHi as a convening platform

### SRHR and COVID-19 webinar series

In the time of COVID, AfNHi has convened various civil society online conversations. At the beginning of the pandemic in Africa, AfNHi convened one of the early conversations among civil society at a time when the world was still trying to figure out the science including transmission and prevention. This [statement and key asks](#) is a reflection of the early regional discussions convened by AfNHi among civil society.

AfNHi Youth Cohort enabled a platform for dialogue on SRHR and COVID-19 among young people in Africa. Through partnerships with other Youth-led movements such as Ready4UHC, Youth4UHC, Global Network of Young People Living with HIV and HER Voice, AfNHi Youth Cohort successfully run three webinars in the SRHR and COVID 19 series.

## LIVE WEBCAST

### SRHR and COVID-19 Part III

THURSDAY, 28th MAY 2020

3PM NAIROBI TIME

Register on the link provided below



Olabukunola (Buky) Williams,  
Nigeria  
Executive Director  
Education as A Vaccine  
**Moderator**



Dr. Renata Tallarico, South Africa  
SYP Regional Coordinator  
UNFPA East and Southern Africa  
**Panellist**



Dayo Atieno, Kenya  
Advocacy and Communications Associate  
Trans Alliance  
**Panellist**



Richard Lusimbo , Uganda  
Research and Documentation Manager  
of Sexual Minorities Uganda, SMUG  
**Panellist**



## Biomedical HIV Prevention Forum (BHPF)

The Biomedical HIV Prevention Forum (BHPF) puts prevention research on the spotlight by providing a unique platform where participants gather to learn about progress in prevention science, best practices in biomedical HIV prevention research and understand the state of the field. The forum is a space for participants to share HIV prevention research perspectives and experiences. The biannual Forum is an official pre-conference of the International Conference on AIDS and STI's in Africa (ICASA). The 2019 BHPF in Kigali was the 4th, following successful forums in 2013, 2015, and 2017.



Biomedical HIV Prevention Forum (BHPF).

## Civil society dialogue with decision makers and technical partners

AfNHi in collaboration GFAN Africa, the Civil Society Platform for Health in Africa (CiSPHA), WACI Health, and Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV Prevention and Health Promotion hosted a civil society dialogue with government representatives from the Rwanda Ministry of Health, Uganda's office of the President special program on HIV, the African Union Commission, The Global Fund and UNAIDS hosted a dialogue between civil society, decision makers and technical partners. The forum focused on "Domestic Resource Mobilization as a Pathway to Sustainable HIV and Health Financing in Africa".



Civil society dialogue at the side lines of the Summit.

## Civil society dialogue at the side lines of the Africa Leadership Meeting (ALM) on Investing in Health and the African Union Summit.

AfNHi in collaboration with [GFAN Africa](#) convened a civil society dialogue at the side lines of the African Leadership meeting (ALM) and the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in early 2019. Through this dialogue, an appreciation among civil society on the need to strengthen advocacy for domestic resources for health was felt. Following this dialogue a call to action was issued urging African Union member states to increased resources for health R&D.



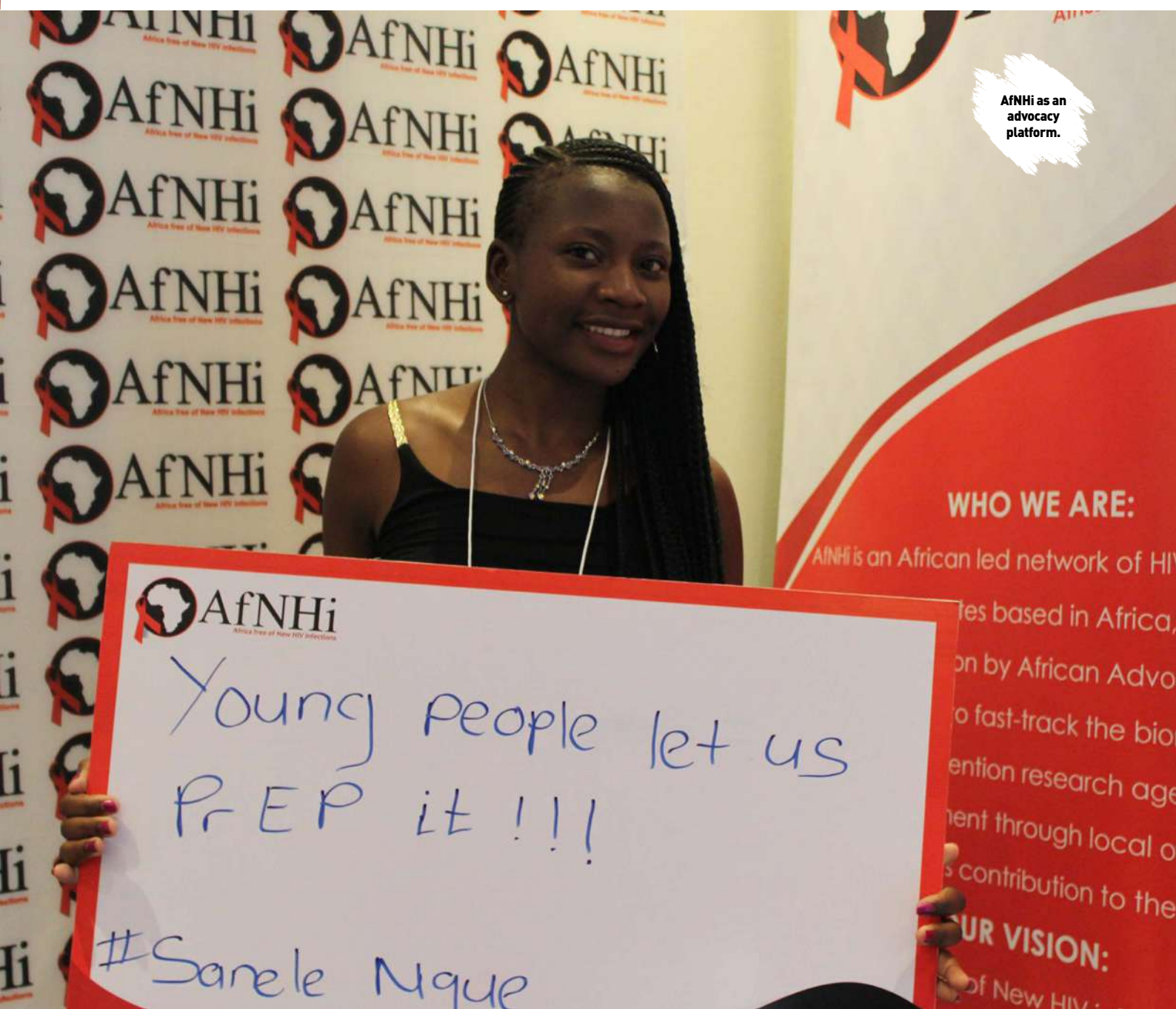
Civil society dialogue at the side lines of the Africa Leadership Meeting (ALM) on Investing in Health and the African Union Summit.

## 13th INTEREST Conference

AfNHi co-convened two meetings during the 2019 INTEREST conference in Ghana. This aimed at advancing HIV Prevention Research Advocacy in Africa by facilitating a space for advocates and community representatives to hold discussions on topics of interest as well as meet with plenary speakers and conference organizers for follow-up or clarifying questions.

## AfNHi Communication platforms

AfNHi has enabled various platforms through which network members and allies can engage and interact. These include a mailing list, which currently has **185** members; social media platforms including Twitter with **435** followers; Facebook with **473** followers



## AfNHi as an advocacy platform

- ii) Advocacy for Domestic resource mobilization. Key moments and opportunities have included:

**A**

### **Pan African Summit on HIV and Health Financing**

AfNHi was invited as a panellist at the high-level Pan African Summit on HIV and Health Financing held in Brazzaville, Congo. Addressing the parliamentarians and stakeholders present, AfNHi called for an increase in domestic resources for health in Africa and towards HIV Research and Development (R&D). The PAN African Parliament, at the end of the summit, released a [communiqué](#) calling for increased domestic resources for HIV and health.

**B**

### **The 12th Extraordinary Summit of the African Union**

AfNHi in collaboration with GFAN Africa Francophone engaged African union member states at the African Union Summit in Niamey in July 2019 on the side lines of the 12th Extraordinary Summit of the African Union and reminded the African leaders of their commitments to increase investments in Health. A civil society [declaration](#) with key asks including on strengthening health systems.

**C**

### **Africa Leadership Meeting (ALM) on Investing in Health and the African Union Summit**

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**D**

### **Budget advocacy training by Global Fund**

A 3-day regional budget advocacy training for civil society, including some AfNHi members, organised by GFAN Africa and supported by the Global Fund. The training, aimed at strengthening civil society and community advocacy on budget advocacy.



## **AfNHi as a platform for Youth leadership development**

### **Youth leadership in HIV prevention research advocacy**

Through a competitive application process, with over 650 applications, the first AfNHi youth cohort was formed, comprising of young African leaders below the age of 24 years across Africa. AfNHi youth cohort champions and advocates for Governments' investments in health and HIV research and development with focus of reducing new HIV infections among young people.

Following the creation of AfNHi Youth Cohort, an induction and training was conducted in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The training offered skills development including leadership, communication skills, information and advocacy skills, and HIV prevention research advocacy knowledge.

AfNHi Youth Cohort leads AfNHi's Youth Engagement in social mobilization campaigns and actively mobilize other young people to support civil society action in targeted countries in line with AfNHi priority campaign issues.

In the time of COVID, AfNHi Youth Cohort enabled a platform for dialogue on SRHR and COVID-19 among young people in Africa. Through partnerships with other Youth-led movements such as Ready4UHC, Youth4UHC, Global Network of Young People Living with HIV and HER Voice, AfNHi Youth Cohort successfully run SRHR and COVID 19 webinar series.

Currently, AfNHi Youth Cohort is finalizing a Youth Engagement Strategy aimed at supporting and formalising youth engagement and participation within AfNHi.

## Reflections:

Africa has the highest HIV burden in the world. The most affected being the vulnerable and marginalized communities with an unacceptably high rates of new HIV infections among young people. Evidence indicates that by the age of 15 years young people have already started having sex many of who have sex under the influence of alcohol and /or drugs increasing their risk of engaging in high risk behavior. Adolescent Girls and Young Women are at a greater risk of engaging in unprotected sex pre disposing them to acquire HIV infection. Marginalized communities also account for high rates of New HIV infections due to limited access to SRHR services and information.

Having Young people at the center of HIV prevention will ensure having youth centric programming on HIV prevention, care and treatment that target adolescents, Young people and LGBTQ+ ensuring they take lead into educating/informing and creating awareness among the youth. Youth led organizations should be funded to respond to the alarming needs of young people during and after the COVID 19 pandemic as young people are leading initiatives such as providing information, in delivering services and advocacy.



**Youth Cohort reflection by Evelyne Odhiambo, AfNHi Youth Cohort representative on the Steering committee.**



## Looking forward

As the world continues to understand the science and find answers to many COVID-19 related questions, AfNHi is keen to play the role of ensuring civil society voices are heard in global and regional processes and spaces. We will tap into processes such as the ACT-Accelerator and contribute to Africa civil society's engagement. In line with AfNHi's [2020 HVAD statement](#), we will continue to call for ethics in research and equity in access.

COVID-19 has revealed the urgent need for research literacy an area that AfNHi is keen to contribute to.

We are also keen to ensure that African governments increase domestic budgetary allocations in strengthening Africa's health systems in ensuring health systems are strengthened and able to deliver life saving products and programs

AfNHi believes that young people deserve the right to represent their own interests and that their voices are critical to driving and effecting positive change among their peers in the effort to end new HIV infections. AfNHi is supporting young people, through AfNHi Youth Cohort, to participate in planning and decision-making processes that matter to them.





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