

**WACI HEALTH/AfNHI**

**BIOMEDICAL HIV PREVENTION**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### Chronic underinvestment in HIV prevention research in Africa

*Friday, 3rd December 2021:* HIV is a severe public health problem in sub-Saharan Africa, where most new infections occur. Chronic underinvestment in prevention research has left an enormous burden on the people of the region.

At a pre-conference at ICASA in Durban, South Africa, on Monday, 6th December 2021, the Biomedical HIV Prevention Forum (BHPF), will work to get the support, insights and knowledge from key players in the HIV prevention community. The session, themed Financing of HIV prevention research in Africa, will explore strategies on how to build knowledge on biomedical HIV prevention research; advance the tools and techniques required to strengthen advocacy for biomedical HIV prevention research and find sustainable paths to advocate for increased domestic resources for HIV prevention research in Africa.

"[AfNHI](#) convenes donors, governments, civil society organisations, industry experts and HIV advocates to participate in strategic and robust discussions, as well as to create a multifaceted strategy for the future of biomedical HIV prevention research in the region", says Rosemary Mburu, Executive Director of [WACI Health](#), the secretariat of AfNHI, which hosts the biannual BHPF.

A recent analysis by Zimbabwe, Rwanda and Cote d'Ivoire examined the levels of government and donor investments for research funding aimed at developing HIV prevention tools to reduce the alarming rate of new HIV infections. Also, mini conferences on biomedical HIV prevention were held in these three countries, revealing that research budgets are vastly inadequate. These investment gaps are caused by weak or poor links between research and policymaking.

New HIV prevention options are being developed to help people lead healthier lives, but biomedical HIV prevention research has been sluggish due to a reduced or stagnant funding budget. HIV research and development could benefit from the new platforms and technologies developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, however funding is essential.

To implement biomedical HIV prevention in Africa, three challenges must be overcome: the lack of political commitment and insufficient funding; providing access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and HIV prevention to marginalised and vulnerable populations, namely; young people, adolescents, young women, sex workers, injection drug users, and men who have sex with men. In addition, there is a lack of adequate and ethical community engagement in biomedical HIV prevention research, even in policy environments that promote it.

As global and national leadership and accountability for HIV prevention are strengthened, implementing effective HIV prevention programs at country level remains challenging. Preventive options such as condoms, PrEP, and harm reduction are difficult to access for young women and girls in high-prevalence countries for several reasons.

Advocacy groups are urging more political will and sustained investment in domestic HIV prevention research to help meet the ambitious prevention targets to end the epidemic particularly when funding for the overall HIV response is decreasing.

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## Background

[Africa Free of New HIV Infections \(AfNHi\)](#) is a network of African HIV prevention research advocates born out of a joint vision by African advocates to prevent new HIV infections. HIV prevention advocates created the network in 2012 to advocate for African-led advocacy in biomedical HIV prevention research. By improving Africa's contribution to the global goals through local ownership and indigenous strategies, it aims to accelerate biomedical HIV prevention research.

An AfNHi Youth Cohort aims to access, empower, and elevate the voices of young people in the region to engage in policy advocacy.

To end Africa's HIV epidemic, AfNHi facilitates and coordinates African-led advocacy through its objectives of encouraging effective and ethical use of domestic resources for HIV Prevention Research, advocating for regulations to support HIV Prevention Research ethics, and enhancing youth engagement with HIV Prevention Research.

[www.afnhi.org](http://www.afnhi.org)

[www.wacihealth.org](http://www.wacihealth.org)



Rosemary Mburu  
Executive Director  
WACI Health

**For media interviews, please contact:**

**Kaamini Reddy**

**Communication Manager**

WACI Health

Cell: +27 72 6206146

Email: [kaamini@wacihealth.org](mailto:kaamini@wacihealth.org)