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Every Woman Matters:
Statement from Civil Society Meeting on HC-HIV, 24-25 February, 2019

On February 24-25 in advance of this WHO Consultation, African women from eSwatini, Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe met to discuss the ECHO trial and the broader context of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights and HIV needs. Several of the women at the pre-meeting are also among the civil society participants at the WHO consultation. We gathered in advance to share information, experiences from consultations with nearly 250 women in ECHO trial countries and around the world, and to hear from WHO, ECHO funders, PATH, FP2020 and others. The statement below reflects priorities that we believe must frame the deliberations for this meeting.

We affirm:

- It is time to look beyond the methods on the shelves in our countries; regardless of the ECHO results we demand increased funding for, commitment to method mix. ECHO has already shown African women will use a range of methods—most of which are not routinely available in our countries. This is information to act on now.
- Every woman matters: we reject the distinction between HIV issues and family planning issue, trade-offs between HIV and maternal mortality. We demand real commitment to integration of HIV and family planning services in a rights-based, woman-centered approach.
- Women's values and preferences in the most-impacted countries (high HIV prevalence, high DMPA use) must guide actions by all stakeholders. There's no way to reflect these without us at the table, included in the process of developing the WHO guidance statement, WHO guidelines and messages from countries, trial sites, etc.
- A woman-centered approach must be guided by science and evidence, not religious beliefs, cultural norms, patriarchal values or false trade-offs between public health and individual lives
- Nothing for us without us means leadership by women, including young women, in all of the engagements described below – ensuring that there are resources for this leadership to be substantive, meaningful and long-term, and that 'youth-led' engagement focuses on groups led by and for women

We demand:

Trial funders – BMGF, USAID, SIDA, WHO:

- Disseminate the results in an accessible, open forum in Africa, with a statement from African women as part of the very initial public event
- Develop a timely communications strategy and dissemination plan for ECHO results developed with African women, governments and other stakeholders in advance of results (end of March 2019)
- A plan for coordination among all the stakeholders impacted – shared with African women
- Funding specifically for women-led civil society with an emphasis on groups led by and for young women to do advocacy on related topics, holding stakeholders accountable and bring information to communities before/after results in ECHO trial and non-ECHO trial countries

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Governments:

- Country-level costed plan for implementation of action steps (guided by ECHO results, but regardless of outcome) led by Ministries of Health, bringing in both HIV and family planning programs and women, including young women, at the development stage – these must include guidance and training for staff, integration of HIV prevention and family planning at service delivery level, and a timeline with clear milestones (a roadmap) for action
- A commitment to monitor and respond to civil society/user evidence and feedback on availability of methods, frequency of stock outs, quality of counseling—and act on the findings

WHO:

- Include at least two African women, one of whom must be a young woman, on the Guideline Steering Committee,
- Develop and share in advance a timeline for when its initial guidance note will be out after results, and when guidelines will be released, and by what means of dissemination

IPPF, FP2020, MSI, PATH, and others

Use national, regional and global networks and channels to raise awareness of ECHO trial in advance of results and, once results are available, to disseminate clear information regarding results – with messages developed in consultation with women (nothing for us without us!)

Women's Engagement Checklist for the four months till results

- Have you reviewed the consolidated recommendations report from the consultations in ECHO countries and region to date? (email Yvette Raphael Yvetteraphael8@gmail.com)
- If you are in a country where a consultation took place already (eSwatini, Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia have you contacted the organizers to find out more about next steps?
- If not in a country where civil society is already engaged, are you working with networks - eg via the HC-HIV Civil Society Advocacy Working Group (contact hmargaret@icwea.org) to identify relevant civil society in country?
- Do you have women representing communities that will be most impacted, including young women, by the results in all preparedness decision-making spaces including task forces, steering committees, communications groups?
- Do you have a budget for their inclusion and full participation, including support for individual women to do work with communities to gather information, test messages, build preparedness?
- Is your “civil society” engagement inclusive of activist and advocacy groups, and not solely service provider organizations?