

2017. **Van Hout, MC, (PI)** Hope, V., Pillay, N., Parker, S., (Liverpool John Moores University, UK) Rusakaniko, S., Mhlanga-Gunda, R., Javangwe, G., Chivandikwa, N., Chimbga, D., Mahaso, S., (University of Zimbabwe); Munthali, S., Banda, C, Mula, C., Ganda, L., Mhango, V. (University of Malawi). Promoting positive sexual and reproductive health and accessible HIV Prevention, Treatment, Care and Support services for women prisoners in Zimbabwe and Malawi. AHRC-MRC Global Public Health Partnership Call October 2017. Valued at £170,242

Lay Summary

The Sub Saharan African (SSA) region remains at the epicentre of the HIV epidemic, with a continuing disproportionate level of HIV infected women and girls, and concentration of HIV among inmates in prisons. HIV prevalence among women prisoners in the region is higher due to sub-standards in hygiene, limited access to SRH services, and interruption of the necessary SRH services during incarceration. The rationale for this new partnership is grounded in the recent UNODC evaluation, which strongly recommended implementing human rights based research, policy reform and targeted service provision focus on women prisoners SRH needs in Zimbabwean and Malawian prisons. Current provisions for women in Zimbabwean and Malawian prison systems currently fall far short of mandated equivalence care standards. Adequate health services in prisons are mandated under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 3, 5, and 16), as well as under the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules) (A/RES/70/175), the Bangkok Rules for Female Prisoners (A/RES/65/229) and in the SSA region, where the partnership will take place, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Minimum Standards for HIV in Prisons.

This unique partnership will challenge and address the SRH inequalities of women prisoners, who are a vulnerable HIV/AIDS population in Zimbabwe and Malawi. Both countries are compromised by a lack of robust gender sensitive monitoring systems for HIV/AIDs in prisons, and little strategic information available around women prisoner's experiences and their SRH needs. It will set the scene for a strong international collaborative effort to monitor, investigate, understand and promote women prisoner's human rights and SRH needs in Zimbabwe and Malawi. The issue of HIV/AIDS in prisons is both a human rights and public health issue, which requires a strategic approach with shared goals of public health and human rights, to prevent HIV transmission and improve health for all, whilst at the same time ensuring the respect of human rights and dignity of those infected and requiring treatment.

The partnership is interdisciplinary and inter sectoral, and brings together key partners from development, law, gender and human rights, and the performing arts, in conjunction with public health and clinical disciplines. Its research, communication and policy reform activities sit within the global aim of leveraging the end of AIDS (Fast Track Approach to end AIDS, UNAIDS 2016-2021) through working and collaborating in an interdisciplinary and multi-sectoral partnership (sustainable development goal, SDG 17). Understanding prison environmental cultures which shape prison staff and wardens' understanding and responsiveness to female prisoners' SRH needs in both countries is vital to inform policy change and improved standards for women prisoners and their children.

In partnership with CSOs, BHASO in Zimbabwe, and CHREAA in Malawi, the project activities will support expert and local knowledge sharing and build national and international collaboration to generate research interest, research capacity and expertise, and develop participatory theatre programmes used to disseminated HIV/AIDS and SRH messages. Local cultures are central to design

and piloting in prisons. Participatory HIV/AIDS communication using forum and image theatre have been used successfully in African communities to explore issues around HIV/AIDS, but have never been applied to women in the prison setting. Using theatre, women prisoners are both creators and spectators. This is central to communication of HIV/AIDS and SRH messages to prisoners and staff, both within the public health and human rights domains. The partnership through its activities will foster health citizenship and a sense of belonging to a community of people whose citizenship has been devalued at two levels, namely that of gender, and that of incarceration.

The partnership represents a form of international sustainable development work which will create a first step in both countries towards addressing female prisoner SRH disparity, and ensure that their views are utilized to contribute to reframing of gender sensitive and human rights based prison responses and prison health policies, and enhance their access to high-quality and stigma-free SRH and HIV PTC&S prison services when needed.

Cross disciplinary Academics

This is the first known attempt to create a collaborative interdisciplinary and inter sectoral partnership spanning UK and LMIC partner countries (Zimbabwe and Malawi) to support collaboration in the strategic human rights in SRH for women prisoners. The partnership is novel in that it is underpinned by several arts and humanities disciplines, namely development, law, gender and human rights, and theory of the performing arts, in conjunction with the public health and clinical disciplines, and the civic society organisations (CSOS) (BHASO/CHREAA). Using this blended and collaborative approach will ensure that partnership activities are designed from within, and will be cognisant of the specific localised and country specific gender, socio-cultural, legal, economic and structural determinants of HIV/AIDs in prison settings in Zimbabwe and Malawi. Strategic capacity building and knowledge sharing is developed through participation and input by local research teams and CSOs currently working in prisons and communities. It will also underpin future collaborations in performing arts work both in prisons and in communities. The experiential approach using participatory forum and image theatre to raise women prisoner (and staff) awareness around HIV/AIDS, SRH and rights to access adequate quality SRH services when incarcerated warrants a cross disciplinary approach to have success and meaning to its participants. This is not achievable by each discipline on its own.

Institutes will share knowledge within this mutually beneficial partnership. The partnership will be coordinated by the Public Health Institute at Liverpool John Moore's University, UK which has expertise in a range of methodologies including rapid evidence synthesis, surveillance, and qualitative methods, and whose remit includes the influencing of national and international health service design and delivery, and health-related policies. The Schools of Law and of Social Sciences are equally well placed for participation given their work in prisons, developing countries and international human rights law. In Zimbabwe, the partnership activities fit into the existing research and educational strategies of the School of Health Sciences, and Departments of Community Medicine, Theatre Arts and of Public Law at the University of Zimbabwe, in terms of HIV and TB rapid assessments in prisons, community based education programming, and use of performing arts in health and gender programming. In Malawi, the partnership activities fit into the existing research and educational strategies of the College of Medicine, and Kamazu College of Nursing, Department of Foundational Law, and Centre for Social Research, in terms of their work around law and human rights, infectious diseases affecting developing countries, SRH, health seeking behaviours and gender. This network of AHRC/MRC disciplines working together on a common shared goal will be

supported by an Expert Advisory Group with representatives from the UNODC national offices in Malawi and Zimbabwe.

Academics benefit by virtue of the inter disciplinary and inter sectoral approach to learning from each other when investigating, understanding and addressing issues around women prisoners SRH and access to HIV PTC&S services. UK academics benefit by learning and doing with African colleagues, and bring a wealth of international knowledge to the partnership. African colleagues impart the cultural and localised knowledge which is paramount to conducting successful research, and designing and implementing HIV communication initiatives in prisons. African colleagues benefit from skills capacity building with UK colleagues, informing high quality international research in their country, high quality publications and contribution to policy reform, and the establishment of positive research networking with a common goal across the region. By working together and creating synergies, this international partnership will encourage and support cross-disciplinary knowledge sharing across research departments, between Institutions and across sectoral boundaries both within the UK and with Zimbabwean and Malawian based colleagues active in healthcare, human rights advocacy, HIV/AIDS communication and sustainable development. The collaboration between universities and CSOs in working together on the issue of women prisoners SRH will also support local research interest and capacity, and encourage development of interdisciplinary courses on public health in prisons.