

Good morning to all, I will skip the formalities, trying to be short:

My name is Eugénia Saraiva I'm leading the Portuguese oldest NGO against AIDS

We are starting a process that engages both the government and the civil society, in order to guarantee the rights of women in Portuguese speaking countries to sexual and reproductive health and universal access to prevention and treatment of HIV and other STIs (eight countries in four continents – two hundred eighty millions of people).

I will not repeat all the proposals and calls for action that we fully subscribe, but on behalf of the Portuguese Civil Society AIDS organizations, and particularly on behalf of women and girls, I would like to point out the following concerns:

Women must be aware of their higher social and biological vulnerability to HIV infection. This means that we are not fuelling the HIV epidemic but we are increasingly getting infected. Therefore this shows the importance of having good preventive programmes that raise women's awareness and makes universal sexual education for boys and girls an urgent need.

Women must play a leading role in standing for their rights and their communities, but man must always be engaged in this process. Without male behavioural and cultural changes, controlling the epidemic is not possible.

Another concern, resulting from my personal experience with infected women, is that though we fully agree with offering universal testing to pregnant women, an effort must be done to promote sexual health and family planning so that women can get tested before pregnancy. The burden of pregnancy, of coping with the knowledge of being HIV positive, of having to decide to carry or not the pregnancy and finally to face the challenge of the relationship is too high. Many relationships in Portugal, and I believe in other countries, come to an end in this process. So we plead for more investment to avoid as much as possible women discovering during the pregnancy their HIV positive status.

The world figures of children born with HIV infection are not tolerable in the twenty one century. In Portugal, from two thousand four to two thousand and six, there was no registered case of mother to child transmission, though the number of pregnancies of HIV positive mothers did highly increase. If this is possible in Portugal it must be possible everywhere. Finally these non infected children must have a mother, so the treatment of HIV positive mothers must be universally insured.

Thank you for your attention.