



Position of the CO “Positive Women” on the use of the described project model aimed at improving access to high-quality, bioethical standards-compliant medical services in the field of sexual and reproductive health for women living with and vulnerable to HIV in Ukraine

Women living with and vulnerable to HIV often face stigma and discrimination when seeking health services. Cases of HIV status disclosure, verbal abuse, disparaging treatment, and denial of obstetric and gynecological services indicate a systemic problem with the realization of sexual and reproductive health rights of women living with HIV. To overcome the barriers that women face in health facilities, human rights-based approaches are needed, especially in the planning and delivery of reproductive and sexual health services.

Today, the organization of obstetric and gynecological outpatient and inpatient care in Ukraine is not sufficiently regulated. There is no legislative regulation to prevent violations of medical ethics, human rights, and abusive treatment of women living with HIV. At the same time, the problem of human rights violations when receiving reproductive and sexual health services is relevant, especially in wartime. These circumstances pose a significant threat to maintaining the proper quality and accessibility of services and require an immediate response and consolidation of efforts by state authorities, civil society, and key partners in the field of public health.

One of the strategic directions of the CO “Positive Women” work is advocacy and promotion of the rights of women living with HIV and those vulnerable to HIV. Based on the results of a number of community-led studies conducted by us, an evidence base has been formed in recent years that reveals existing barriers from the perspective of users of reproductive and sexual health services. The results of the studies indicate shortcomings both in the field of human rights and in the organization of the provision of relevant services at different levels. It is important that these conclusions and recommendations are taken into account by decision-makers in the public sector in the process of developing and adopting relevant policies, as well as in shaping the advocacy policy priorities of the CO “Positive Women”. The mentioned studies are presented at the links:

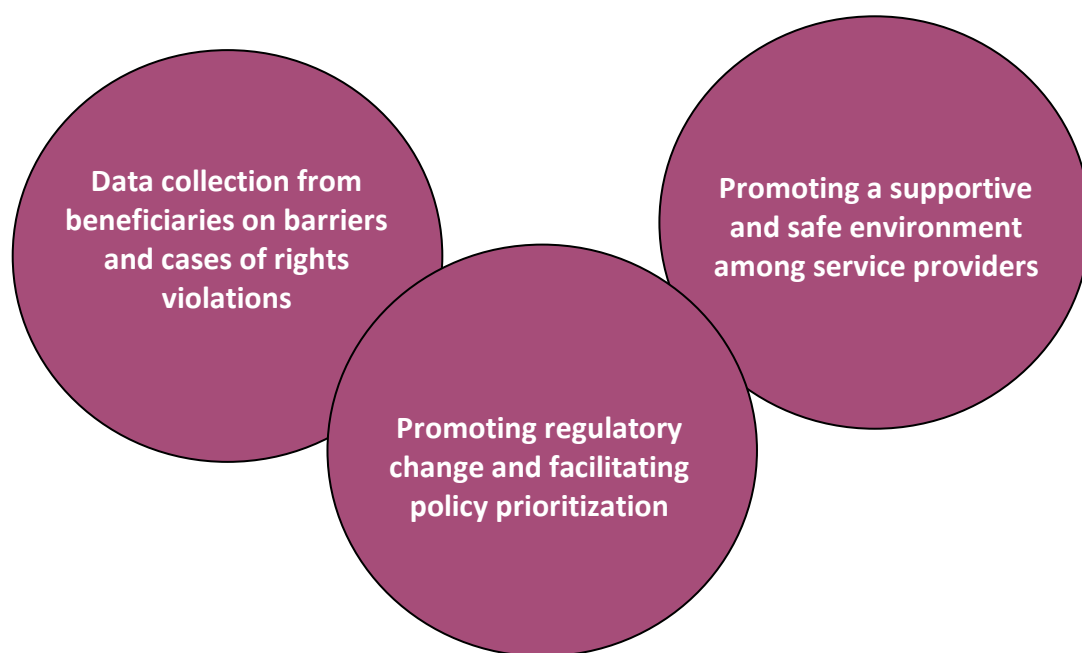
- [The impact of war on women living with HIV in Ukraine](#)
- [Obstetric violence against HIV-positive women in Ukraine](#)
- [Analysis of barriers to access to social and health services for women living with HIV and vulnerable to HIV in Ukraine](#)
- [Assessment of the availability and quality of HIV, tuberculosis, and sexual and reproductive health services for women living with HIV](#)
- [Identifying barriers to access to services for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV among women living with HIV](#)
- [Research on the provision of sexual and reproductive health services to women with HIV who are planning a pregnancy, pregnant women and postpartum women at the regional level of Ukraine](#)

UNAIDS in its [report for World AIDS Day 2024](#) identified that women-led networks have a unique ability to promote positive change and play an important role in overcoming stigma against women in accessing reproductive and sexual health services.

The leadership and proactive participation of the CO “Positive Women”, as an organization led by women and created to meet the needs of women, in the processes of regulatory changes is an undeniable factor in joining forces with partners and successfully achieving the expected results.

In the process of strategic planning of its activities, the CO “Positive Women” is guided by the “evidence-change” model, which involves accelerating the adoption of the most effective political decisions for the implementation of people-centered approaches in the field of health care, in particular within the framework of the provision of reproductive and sexual health services.

The “evidence-change” model



As part of the “evidence-change” model implementation, CO “Positive Women” implemented the following intermediate steps:

- a number of training sessions were held for reproductive and sexual health service providers to help improve the quality of services, implement a people-centered approach, and create a supportive and safe environment free from stigma for women living with HIV and those vulnerable to HIV;
- in active collaboration with partner organizations, national experts, as well as UNAIDS and WHO offices in Ukraine, efforts have been made to develop a draft “Regulations on the principles of preventing and combating abusive treatment during the planning, management of pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum care” (Regulations). This document aims to address existing regulatory gaps and identify approaches to preventing abusive treatment of women living with HIV and those vulnerable to HIV in obstetrics and gynecology services;
- together with partner organizations, a National Dialogue was held on ways to implement bioethical standards in the national health legislation with the participation

of WHO, the community of women who use drugs and sex workers, as well as experts in the field of obstetrics, gynecology, and human rights protection;

- in the result of discussions during the National Dialogue, CO “Positive Women” prepared and sent a letter to the Minister of Health of Ukraine with a proposal to ensure further leadership of the Ministry of Health in coordinating the development of a regulatory interdepartmental document to ensure the implementation of bioethical standards in the process of providing services for the protection of motherhood and childhood, reproductive and sexual health;
- recognizing the importance of strengthening political leadership in initiating regulatory changes, a dialogue has been initiated with the Ministry of Health of Ukraine regarding further coordination and interaction in the process of developing and adopting relevant documents.

As part of the “evidence-change” model implementation, CO “Positive Women” has identified the following priorities:

1. **To expand the coverage** of the organization's beneficiaries with comprehensive services for the protection and realization of rights related to ensuring sexual and reproductive health in order to increase awareness among women living with HIV and vulnerable to HIV about their rights and build conscious capacity to protect them.
2. **To conduct ongoing monitoring** (regularly collect evidence from the organization's beneficiaries) of existing barriers for women living with HIV or vulnerable to HIV when seeking sexual and reproductive health services in order to respond immediately and prevent their occurrence.
3. **To promote the formation of multisectoral cooperation** and consolidation of the efforts of non-governmental, international organizations, as well as state authorities to create coalitions in order to ensure prioritization of issues related to the development of a strategy for preserving the sexual and reproductive health of the population of Ukraine, based on human rights, and ensuring the accessibility of the full range of relevant comprehensive services.
4. **To ensure ongoing sharing of collected data** on the barriers and needs of women living with and vulnerable to HIV with a wide range of interested partners for use in the process of creating subject-specific guidelines, programs and strategies using and promoting a people-centered approach.
5. **To ensure the ongoing active participation** of women living with and vulnerable to HIV, as well as the proactive participation of leading reproductive and sexual health professionals, human rights defenders, and other experts in the processes of developing and adopting people-centered sexual and reproductive health strategies and programs, regulations, and bylaws.
6. **To expand the rights and opportunities of the community** of women living with HIV in Ukraine, including their involvement as experts on human rights and combating violence in working groups and other coordination mechanisms for the development of national strategies and plans, mandatory repeal of the article of the Criminal Code of Ukraine that criminalizes HIV transmission, as well as the elimination of structural and social barriers, including stigmatization and discrimination of people living with HIV.