



SAHCS statement on end of 16 days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and notes International Human Rights Day.

Johannesburg, 12 December 2022. The 10th of December marked the end of 16 days of activism from November 25 (International Day Against Violence Against Women) to December 10 (International Human Rights Day). We commemorate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that sets out fundamental human rights and freedoms to which everyone, everywhere is entitled, enshrining the rights to dignity, freedom and justice for all.

All too often women's and girls' human rights are restricted or ignored. This impedes individuals and communities and undermines South Africa's efforts to achieve sustainable development. Gender-based Violence (GBV) fuels HIV transmission and compromises access to treatment and care and adherence to Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART) for survivors of violence. South Africa has almost 200 000 new HIV infections yearly, with almost 130 000 occurring in adolescent girls and young women (AGYW). The disproportionately high rates of infections in young women are linked to sexual violence; to achieve the UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets, ending sexual violence remains an important priority.

Human rights protection is also a key element in the fight against HIV. The 2022 theme of 'Dignity, Freedom, and Justice for All' underpins the need to ensure these rights are universally enshrined. A context of care that ensures social justice and respectful health service delivery is required to ensure that all populations are able to access prevention, treatment and care. This is all the more critical for key populations - Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM), People who Use/Inject drugs, people in prisons & other closed settings, sex workers and transgender people - who experience higher rates of newly acquired HIV compared to our general population.

The Southern African HIV Clinicians Society believes that protection of human rights for all – including vulnerable, marginalised and key populations - must be central to the local and global response to ending HIV by 2030 and will continue to promote the principles of equity, dignity and empowerment in all our work.