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APHA launches fundraising campaign to supporting women and girls builds their resilience

The theme for this year's World Aids Day is, "Ending the HIV/AIDS Epidemic: Resilience and Impact". This is a fitting theme to celebrate one of South Africa's well-known face in feminist and human rights movements in South Africa, Yvette Raphael, Executive Director at Advocates for the Prevention of HIV in Africa (APHA) as she commemorates the 20th anniversary of living positively with HIV. APHA is marking this milestone of resilience by raising funds to provide psychosocial support to 2000 young women and girls who are survivors of trauma, GBV and/or living with HIV.

The APHA fundraising campaign, #Yvette20thAnniversary, aims to raise R2 million which will be used to provide psychosocial support to 2000 women and girls over the next 4 years. "One of the things that saved my life when I was first diagnosed with HIV was having a dedicated counsellor who held my hand while I navigated my status and trying to cope emotionally with it. Through this fundraising campaign, we want women and girls to have hope again. We want to be able to provide more than just prayer and counselling. We want to provide hands-on, practical support that they can use to rebuild their lives and stand firmly on their own", said Raphael.

The APHA psycho-social support programme will support women and girls who are victims of trauma, gender-based violence and those living with HIV/AIDS across South Africa. Such a programme can go a long way towards building resilience and impact millions of lives as we know that many households in South Africa are held by women.

According to UNAIDS *Seize the Moment* Report on HIV/AIDS released earlier this year, while access to life-saving treatment has increased, inequalities still keep many women and children vulnerable in Africa.. The report shows unequal progress, with too many vulnerable people and populations left behind. Around 62% of new HIV infections occurred among key populations and their sexual partners, including gay men and other men who have sex with men, sex workers, people who inject drugs and people in prison, despite them constituting a very small proportion of the general population. Women and girls in sub-Saharan Africa continue to be the most affected and accounted for 59% of all new HIV infections in the region in 2019, with 4500 adolescent girls and young women between 15 and 24 years old becoming infected with HIV every week. Young women accounted for 24% of new HIV infections in 2019, despite making up only 10% of the population in sub-Saharan Africa.

The #Yvette20thAnniversary campaign can be found here: <https://bit.ly/35vASdw>