

Lillian Mworeko is the executive director of the International Community of Women living with HIV Eastern Africa (ICWEA), but I worked under Hannington Mutabarura as the visual communications intern. ICWEA strives to give women living with HIV in Eastern Africa a voice to show that a lack of gender equality and proper sexual and reproductive rights are the root causes to such epidemic. ICWEA is an organization run by HIV positive women, who use personal experiences to promote advocacy for treatment and prevention. In addition, the ICWEA is working to become more active in the political field so that women, who have the highest rates of infection in Africa, can improve the policies, programs, and laws to increase the accessibility to treatment for women living with HIV.

My responsibilities with the ICWEA include: working with the communications team to implement a communications strategies, suggest and propose different ways of reaching out to young women and girls in the different parts of the region. I also was in charge of documentation of experiences of women living with HIV, best practices of prevention and treatment, and success stories in the form of videos, write ups, and pictures. I participated in some of the key meetings and events organized by ICWEA or where ICWEA has been invited for the purpose of reporting back accordingly. I also worked on website development, and helped to ensure that those skills were transferred down to certain staff members.

I learned a lot about interacting with other people, and the importance of time and patience. I helped staff with a variety of computer problems, including fixing personal devices: combining scanned documents into a single PDF and writing some formulas to add into financial reports. I also read through almost all of the reports to compile background and other data to create a detailed brochure. Furthermore, I read and summarized 19 stories to later be shared at another conference. In addition, I attended all meetings in which I took photographs and notes on the content. I also arrived early for the meetings to help set up the projector, facilitate registration, pass out booklets, make nametags, set up computer presentations during the meeting, as well as work the sound and microphone passing. I wrote one report alone and co-wrote three others. I also created a schedule of employee attendance in Excel for the TASO assessment. I have also been working to improve the website. I have read through the entire Wordpress site and created a document on my suggestions for improving the website. I have made a series of content changes to all of the live pages on the new website. For example in one case, the hyperlinks did not transfer from the old website to the new one, so I went back and re-linked all of the hyperlinks so they can actually function now (they are not just empty links). I have also been researching new plugins for wordpress to increase the speed of the website. I also looked into a way for people to donate money on the website with the download of a certain plugin. The website donations would be very beneficial

for small outside donors. I also drafted a letter to terminate the Internet services, which was incomprehensibly slow. Previous to making website postings, I changed the format of all of the documents to PDFs, so that they could be posted. I also went through all of the posted stories under the news section on the website to edit and improve them. I have posted a series of reports, scanned articles and written descriptions about each to post to the website. I have also been helping to create online groups as a platform for discussion of a supplementary budget.

This was a summer of discerning potential significance to taking pictures. During the summer, I began to think about the relationship between social movements and photography, specifically how problems are solved in nuanced ways by day-to-day experience. I learned that it takes a specific bias to correctly portray a social issue, like forced/coerced sterilization. It takes time to learn about the issue, and correctly portray the ostracized party, without victimizing them. Once that is determined, one can then document the subject to begin shedding light upon the issue. During my stay, I met women who were discriminated against due to their depressed economic status. Unjust things were done to them; however they had no means of righting the situation. This is a case where documentary work can spark conversation to bring about change. I learned about peer-to-peer advocacy-women who advocate for themselves, in this case the phrase “nothing for us, without us.” ICWEA is a network up of women that are HIV

positive advocating for other HIV positive women. I took part in meetings with health providers present, where women shared personal testimonies of forced/coerced sterilization in unconsented situations. The purpose of this meeting and others like this was to expose certain issues to seek justice. I also took part in a press conference that criticized the 2016/2017 national health budgets for not covering ARVs. I learned from these types of events the value of having women with HIV trained to conduct research about these issues, because they got results. The women trusted their peers, who had gone through similar problems to help them gain justice. The ICWEA membership trusts the staff and volunteers to help them fight for justice from a legal standpoint (adjusting policies to stop injustices), a health standpoint (to better quality health facilities and service providers), and a relationship standpoint (increased support from their partners).

I also learned a lot about life forms in the village perspective. The house had one sink with running water, until it stopped working towards the end; this meant that we had to get water from the cisterns to do dishes, and then boil water to sanitize. We also had to gather water to flush the toilet, which is actually a lot more water than what I thought, as it was the main source of our water gathering. We learned to wash our clothes by hand by scrubbing the fabric on itself and hanging them inside out on the line. The house had white tile floors, so that meant that each week we had to mop and sweep the house because of the large amount of dust that we tracked in from

walking in the village. We also had to cook from scratch each meal, planning ahead and getting the necessary ingredients. We had no refrigerator, so we had to eat what was cooked to prevent bug infestation in the house. Bathing was also challenging because the water had to be boiled, cooled, and then the single bucket bath could begin.

I realized that I am intrigued by documentary work, and the different effects that it can have. I have also learned the importance of understanding, specifically about certain social issues, so that the correct bias comes through. I think that it is morally incorrect to exploit the ostracized group. This summer has given me interest in learning about social issues. I also am interested in some design and website-related work. However I have realized that I do prefer to be in an urban setting.