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Analysis Article

Policies and the Property Inheritance Rights: the Case of HIV Positive Women in Abia State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

Introduction:

There are statutory laws, cultures, traditions and policies in Nigeria especially in Abia State, that govern women's right to inherit properties in their names. The problem is that society enforces these policies that forbid women's inheritance rights including those HIV positive. Study aimed to examine the extent to which policies and traditions that negatively influence HIV positive women's rights to inherit family resources could be modified to encourage their sustenance. It also aimed to assess views of traditional rulers, as custodians of culture, on how to change inheritance rights of HIV positive women especially those widowed, so as to favour their economic security.

Materials and Method:

Study was a mixed design that utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods. The sample consisted of all the 98 HIV positive women who are members of the network of people living positively with HIV and AIDS. Data collection instruments were questionnaire, focus group discussions and interview guides which were administered. Key informant interviews were conducted with five traditional rulers in charge of five randomly selected communities where the respondents came from. This was done to authenticate respondents' responses. Data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively.

Result:

About 85 of 98 (86.7%) of respondents were denied rights to family resources. As high as 77 of 98 (78.6%) of women were aware of risks of unprotected sex, yet 54 of 98 (55%) of them practiced it. Common reasons proffered for taking the sexual risks were financial gains and sex partners' dislike for condom use.

Conclusion:

The proportion of respondents who practised unprotected sex due to economic insecurity, suggests increase in HIV prevalence. If this risky sexual behaviour continues, government‘s efforts to reduce HIV prevalence would yield little or no significant result.

Keywords:
inheritance rights; HIV and AIDS; unprotected sex; policies; Nigeria

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Introduction:

In Nigeria, especially Abia State, policies, customary laws, customs and culture prohibit inheritance rights to females. Prejudices and gender inequalities in the customs place women in a subordinate role by not allowing them to possess properties like land, housing and cash crops in their names [1], [2], [3], [4]. Basically, the society through traditions and policies, encourages overwhelming preferences for male economic empowerment thereby, create gaps , barriers and discriminations against women especially, those with HIV and AIDS. These gaps negatively affect women’s , sustenance. [5], [6], [7].

Research has shown that denying widows’ inheritance rights places 60% of them perpetually on economic dependence for the maintenance of their families. Economic dependence results to the negative psychological feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, frustrations and worries common among HIV positive women [8], [9], [10], [11]. These psychological feelings contribute to the limitations HIV positive women have in disclosing their sero-statuses even during sexual relationships.[12], [13], [14], [15]. This non-disclosure of sero-status could play substantial roles in increasing the vulnerability of individuals to HIV infection [16], [17], [18], [19], [20].

Findings have shown that convincing stakeholders to modify the policies and cultures that deny inheritance rights to women has been a herculean task in developing countries [21], [22], [23], [24], [25]. Studies have argued that making family resources accessible to women including those living positively with HIV and AIDS requires resource mobilization through collaboration and advocacy with gatekeepers and stakeholders [26], [27], [28]. Evidence from researchers shows that a good number of HIV positive women engage in sexual risks for financial reasons [29], [30]. Therefore, economic empowerment of HIV positive women is needed to mitigate the consequences of HIV/AIDS and reduce overdependence on others for sustenance [31], [32], [33], [34].

Study aimed to identify the extent to which the women living positively with HIV and AIDS have access to family resources especially at the death of their husbands. It also examined the willingness of the traditional rulers to amend some of the stringent cultural practices that negatively affect women inheritance rights.to family resources. Therefore, the study explored strategies that could motivate traditional rulers to support women economic empowerment. .

Materials and Method:

Study Setting

The study area was Abia State of Nigeria. Abia State is located in the South-eastern part of Nigeria between latitudes 04°17' N and 07°06' N and longitudes 05°23' E and 09°28' E. The main source of sustenance is farming. In the indigenous customary set up, males are entitled to more privileges than their female counterparts. For instance, males are entitled to the following: marrying many wives, extramarital sexual relationships, maintaining the family name, and inheriting family resources. The females are not entitled to these. This practice makes it impossible for women including widows to inherit immovable resources like land, house, cash crops and others.

In Abia State, there are two types of marriages, statutory and customary. Marriages are usually observed under the customary law which imposes that women married under this law should practise exogamy, that is, at the death of husbands, they are to cohabit with a member of the husband's descent [24], [30]. Majority of the families in Abia State, practice patrilineal system of inheritance, while a small proportion practice matrilineal. In both systems of inheritance under the customary law, the policy and rule are that the men are the sole owners of properties in any marriage [25]. In a situation where a woman's husband dies, all the family properties are inherited by the eldest surviving brother of the late husband and not the widow. Again, in a situation where the late husband married many wives, and has no surviving brothers, the nearest relation of the late husband would inherit all the properties except if the late relation had children who are mature, then a fraction of their late father's resources could be willed to the first sons of each surviving wife. . The amount of the family property that each of the sons gets, will depend on their ages. The eldest of the sons gets larger share than others.

Study Design:

The study was a mixed design which utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods of research.

Sample and sampling technique:

A total sample of 98 HIV positive women who are members of network of people living positively with HIV and AIDS in Abia State was studied. Women in network of people living positively with HIV and AIDS were studied because of the difficulty in identifying HIV positive individuals in the society. Individuals are usually reluctant for reasons of avoiding rejection, stigmatization and isolation to disclose their sero status. It was considered safer to study those whose sero-status is already known.

Five (5) traditional rulers randomly selected from the fourteen (14) local government areas where the respondents came from were included in the study. The traditional rulers are considered as veritable instruments for change in the communities. They are the only people who could be lobbied to modify the policies and rules in ways they could positively influence inheritance rights of women especially those that are HIV positive.

Nine (9) focus group discussions comprising 7-9 HIV positive women were organized with the help of three trained research assistants. The questions in the focus group discussions contained unstructured questions which sought information on types of marriage , policies that affect inheritance rights, and others. The women were grouped using their ages, marital statuses, types of marriage, habitation status and place of residence.

Instrument for data collection:

Data collection instruments were questionnaire, focus group discussions and interview guides. The questions in these instruments were both open-ended and closed- ended. The questions sought information on demographic variables, types of relationship HIV positive women enjoy with family members, policies and/or customs that influence inheritance rights, as well as the activities women do to sustain their families in the communities. Interview guide contained open-ended questions that sought the likelihood of the traditional rulers amending the policies and cultures that negatively affect women's inheritance rights. It also sought the roles traditional rulers play in encouraging women's economic empowerment especially those HIV positive.

Data collection method

This descriptive study utilized questionnaire, focus group discussions and interview guides for data collection. The questionnaire was administered for those who could not read and write and self-administered for those who could read and write.

Focus group discussions were done to uncover some vital information that the questionnaire could not cover on cohabitation, sexual behavior and types of marriages contracted. All the information got during the focus group discussions were tape recorded and transcribed by the three trained Research Assistants.

Key informant interview guide was administered for uniformity because of the disparity in the education of the traditional rulers.

Ethical considerations and informed consent:

The Abia State University Ethical Committee as well as that of the Abia State University Teaching Hospital vetted and approved the instruments for the study before issuing the ethical considerations for the commencement of the study. Following this approval, informed consents of the President of network of people living positively with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA), all the female members of the network and from the traditional rulers were obtained. Their respective approvals enabled the researchers to collect information from the respondents uninhibited. The researchers gave statements of confidentiality as well as briefs on objectives and benefits of the study. Also a request for permission to tape-record the session was made to participants and this was granted. In addition, a written permission to conduct the study with traditional rulers was requested and obtained from the Chairman of the traditional rulers council. This enabled the researchers to collect information from the five traditional rulers included in the study.

Method of data analysis:

Data from focus group discussions and interview were grouped into themes and analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse data from the questionnaire.'.

Results:

Table 1 shows that 79 out of 98(80.6%) of the respondents studied were between the ages of 15 and 46 years. In terms of marital status, 26 out of 98 (26.5%) were separated/divorced, 39 out of 98(39.8%) were widowed while 15 out of 98 (15.3%) were single. This shows that a greater proportion of the respondents were made up of those separated/divorced, and widowed. For the education and occupation of the respondents, a good number of them had secondary and tertiary education while their occupations were mainly farming and civil service. However, 10 out of 98 (10.2%) of the respondents were unemployed as contained in table 1.

The influence marital status had on the extent respondents were chastised was examined. The results are contained in table 3. From this table, 38 of 59(64.4%), and 12 of 59(20.3%) of the respondents chastised, were those widowed and married respectively.

Realizing that the respondents in all the marital statuses were chastised for demanding financial assistance, the activities the respondents usually undertake for sustenance were explored. The findings are contained in table 4. From this table, the respondents carried out several activities for survival.

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The findings show that the respondents engaged themselves with two main activities. First, 25 of 98(25.5%) acted as hired labourers to others in the farm, a strenuous activity that could wear them down health wise. The second activity was having sexual relationships for money. About 54 of 98(55.1%) of the respondents earned their livelihood by having sexual relationships for money. This activity was considered as a risk because of the likelihood of infecting the sex partners.

Table 1. demographic characteristics of the respondents

Age:	frequency
<15 years	4(4.1%)
16- 20 years	7(7.1%)
21-25	12(12.2%)
26-30	23(23.5%)
31-35	16(16.3%)
36-40	15(15.3%)
41-45	13(13.3%)
46 years and above	8(8.2%)
Total	98(100%)
Marital status:	
Single	15(15.3%)
Married	18(18.4%)
Separated/divorced	26(26.5%)
Widowed	39(39.8%)
Total	98(100%)
Education:	
Primary school	29(29.6%)
Secondary school	37(37.8%)
Tertiary	32(32.6%)
Total	98(100%)
Occupation	
Unemployed	10(10.2%)
Trading	18(18.4%)
Farming	36(36.8%)
Teaching	12(12.2%)

Table 1 (continued)

Age:	frequency
Civil service	22(22.4%)%
Total	98(100%)

A good number of the respondents reported that they were chastised by family members. They gave reasons why they were chastised. The reasons given by the respondents are contained in table 2. From the table, the common reasons 38 of 59(64.4%) and 36 out of 59 (61%) of the respondents gave for being chastised were the demand for the possession of husbands' properties and asking for financial assistance respectively.

Table 2. Respondents and reasons for being chastised

Reason	Frequency N=59
Demanding for husbands properties	38(64.4%)
refusing to be inherited	22(37.3%)
Knowing one's HIV status	29(49.2%)
asking for financial assistance	36(61%)
not having male children	19(32.2%)
Being always sick	11(18.6%)
refusing to have sex	20(33.9)
being accused of killing husband	15(25.4%)

*** Multiple choices

Table 3. Marital statuses of respondents chastised

Chastised	Married	Single	widowed	Separated/divorced	Total
Yes	12(20.3%)	9(15.3%)	38(64.4%)	11(11.2%)	59(60.2%)
No	6(15.4%)	6(15.4%)	1(0.3%)	15(38.5%)	39(39.8%)
Total	18(18.4%)	15(15.3%)	39(39.8%)	26(26.5%)	98(100%)

Table 4. respondents' means of sustenance

Means of livelihood	Frequency
Hired labourers in the farm.	25(25.5%)
Having sex with friends for assistance	54 (55.1%)
Petty trading	15(15.3%)

Table 4 (continued)

Means of livelihood	Frequency
Church assistance	9(9.2%)
Community assistance	7(7.2%)
Donations from others	12(12.2%)

***multiple choice**

It was considered necessary to identify the residential areas of the respondents who said they had sex with friends and and also whether they used condom during such sex. Table 5 contains this information. From the table, 37 of 54(37.8%) of the respondents who had sex without condom, live in the rural areas while 17 of 54(17.3%) of others live in the urban areas. This shows that respondents who are resident in the rural areas had sex without condom more than those resident in the urban area.

Table 5. Respondents who had unprotected sex by residence

Used condom during sex	Respondents' residence		
	Urban	Rural	Total
Yes	11(11.2%)	9(9.2%)	20(20.4%)
No	17(17.3%)	37(37.8%)	54(55.1%)
Do not have sex (abstinence)	10(10.2%)	14(14.3%)	24(24.5%)
Total	38 (38.8%)	60(61.2%)	98(100%)

Considering the number of respondents 24 of 98(24.5%) who said they practice abstinence, the extent to which the respondents perceived having unprotected sex as risks for HIV transmission was examined. To assess this, respondents were requested to rate the extent to which they perceived having sex without condom as a risk. The ratings were grouped in four categories: high, moderate, low, and no risk. The respondents marital statuses were matched with their perceptions. Findings in table 6 show that as high as 78 of 98 (79.6%) of the respondents in all the marital statuses perceived having sex without condom as a risk for HIV transmission, yet, 54 of 98(55.1%) of them engaged in unprotected sex. When the respondents' perceptions were matched with their marital statuses, the findings show that two groups of respondents, widows and divorced/ separated perceived having unprotected sex as a risk more than others.

Table 6. Respondents' perceptions of the risk of unprotected sex by marital status

Perceived risk	Frequency of response by marital status					
	Widows (not inherited)	Widows (inherited)	Married	Separated/divorced	Single	Total
High risk	9(9.2%)	2(2.0.%)	6(6.1%)	10(10.2%)	5(5.1%)	32(32.7%)
Moderate risk	6(6.1%)	3(3.1%)	3(3.1%)	7(7.1%)	3(3.1%)	22((22.4)

Table 6 (continued)

Perceived risk	Frequency of response by marital status					
	Widows (not inherited)	Widows (inherited)	Married	Separated/divorced	Single	Total
Low risk	5(5.1%)	4(4.1%)	4(4.1%)	4(4.1%)	3(3.1%)	20(20.4%)
No risk	2(2.0%)	8(8.2%)	5(2.0%)	5(2.0%)	4(4.1%)	24(24.5)
Total	22(22.4%)	17(17.3%)	18(18.4%)	26(26.5%)	15(15.3%)	98(100%)

The reasons the respondents had for taking the risk of engaging in unprotected sex were explored. Realizing the fact that a good number 78 of 98(79.6%) of the respondents perceived unprotected sex as risk to HIV transmission, the reasons 54 of 98(55.1%) of them had for engaging in unprotected sex were examined. The findings in table 7 show that the commonest reason 47 of 54(87%) respondents who engaged in unprotected sex had was that their sex partners disliked condom use. This finding calls for health education to enlighten HIV positive women on the benefits of condom use.

Table 7. Respondents' reasons for engaging in unprotected sex

Reasons	N=54 Frequency of response
Male partners dislike condom use	47(87%)
Ashamed to negotiate condom use	19(35.2%)
Do not have condom	13(24%)
Wants to have babies	12(15.4%)
Needs financial assistance	39(72.2%)
Fear of being beaten	17(31.5%)
To avoid being termed as promiscuous	21(38.9%)
To protect my sero-status	27(50%)
`I hate having sex with condom	12(15.4%)
No reasons	9(16.7%)

*** Multiple choices

Results from the traditional rulers:

Findings from the five (5) randomly selected traditional rulers from the fourteen (14) local government areas where the respondents came from show that majority of the traditional rulers have negative views on the need to modify policies that will allow women especially those HIV positive including those widowed to inherit family resources. The traditional rulers had negative views about women empowerment. In the words of three traditional rulers, *the culture is that women should be subservient to the men. If women are allowed to inherit properties that means they will be co-equals with men and men may not be fully respected* . The traditional rulers argued that the communities will be unkind to them if they support women inheritance rights. One of the traditional rulers stated that *encouraging women to inherit family assets would make them obstinate and difficult to be controlled. This will be against the culture.* Two traditional rulers emphasized that *whatever economic assets*

women acquire, must be manned by men'. One of the traditional rulers clearly stated that *it would be a taboo to allow females the opportunity of inheriting family resources when there are males in the family.* The traditional rulers had the common belief that men as breadwinners should keep custody of all resources so as to plan how to disburse them for the benefit of all family members. Their argument was that assets procured by women should be handed over to the men for safekeeping. The traditional rulers' arguments were that *women cannot inherit properties particularly landed property because by traditional African society, women are like strangers both in their fathers' and husbands' houses. That sooner or later they either get married or divorced, they leave their families and become strangers. They concluded that since women have no permanent home, that they cannot be entrusted with family resources.* The traditional rulers' perception was that if women are allowed to inherit properties, that they would take the inherited items to either their husbands' or fathers' houses. The findings of the study reveal some unwillingness of the traditional rulers to modify the culture that denies women even those living with HIV and AIDS the opportunity to inherit family resources.

The need to examine the extent to which the traditional rulers are aware of the nutritional needs of people living positively with HIV and AIDS was explored. Findings show that a good number of the traditional rulers have little or no knowledge of the types of food HIV positive people need to maintain good health. Four of the traditional rulers said *the staple food is 'gari' (cassava product) what else do people need? When there is money, one can then purchase rice and beans to complement the staple food.* Two traditional rulers stated that *hard working women should produce enough food that will sustain their families.* The traditional rulers' feeling is that only lazy women who cannot farm complain of hunger. The responses from the traditional rulers show that they have poor knowledge of the types of food those living positively with HIV and AIDS need to maintain good health. They need more than carbohydrates in their diet to cope with the health challenges of HIV and AIDS.

The traditional rulers were interviewed on the likely causes of chastisement reported by the respondents. The responses from three (3) traditional rulers revealed that stubbornness, laziness and poor interpersonal relationships were the main drivers of conflicts in the family. Two (2) traditional rulers emphasized that some widows experienced conflicts because they disrespected the family by having sexual relations with men outside the family circle. One (1) traditional ruler stated that *by tradition, the younger male relation of the family of the deceased is entitled to inherit the widow so as to take care of the widow's needs. When women neglect this and have affairs with men outside the family, conflicts will be inevitable.* This indicates that wife inheritance is still practiced in some communities. The fact that some of the traditional rulers emphasized wife inheritance as among the causes of conflict in the family confirms the fact that the traditional rulers lack knowledge of the modes of HIV transmission. However, findings show that none of the traditional rulers interviewed had prior knowledge of those who are living positively with HIV and AIDS in their communities. This finding shows that those living with HIV and AIDS rarely disclose their sero–statuses in the communities where they live.

Result from Focus Group Discussions:

Findings from the focus group discussions confirm that women are not considered as potential heirs when family resources are shared. Reports from five (5) women reveal that *the elders and the traditional rulers superintend over all decision –making in the family. They determine each family members' rights to inherit family resources. Females are usually excluded from major decisions in the family including resolution of conflicts between husbands and wives.*

Findings on the extent to which family members provide sustenance to the respondents reveal that a good number of the HIV positive women including widows do not receive financial assistance. Seven (7) women said we have problems. *Our children have dropped out of school due to inability to pay their school fees. The worst is that they did not take the school examinations. The relations of our husbands have been approached on this for assistance, but they are reluctant to assist. Their responses are always in the negative. They will tell you, there is no money to shoulder another person's responsibilities in addition to theirs.* When the women were asked whether those living in the urban areas also experience similar treatments, a good number of them responded in the positive that they have similar encounters showing that both HIV positive women in urban and rural areas

encounter limitations in getting financial assistance from family members. Six (6) women said, *if we are allowed access to our husbands' family assets, we would easily raise money to maintain our families, as well as pay our children's school fees before they are sent out of school.*

Ten (10) women said, *our greatest problem now is how to raise money for transport to collect the anti-retroviral drugs each month. We spend between N5, 000 and N13, 000 (US$40 to $95) each month on cost of transportation to collect drugs from the centre.* Five (5) women reported *We were inherited by our brothers' in-law with the hope that they will support us financially but to our greatest surprise, they do not provide for our financial needs. When we ask for money they will hush us by telling us to look for what to do to raise money to maintain our families. As we speak now, feeding the family is a problem. We sometimes go to do odd jobs with our children just to raise money for the family upkeep or to ask for assistance from the church members. Whenever, we are sick, how to pay hospital bills will force us to settle with local treatments just to save cost.* These narratives show that the interests of women's welfare rarely receive priority when decisions are made in the family.

Types of relationship respondents enjoy with family members were explored:

From the reports given by eight (8) respondents, a good number of the respondents especially those widowed had horrifying experiences with family members. Seven (7) women said *we are constantly treated harshly.* Six (6) others confirmed that they *experienced constant aggression that result to being chased out of the family house. They emphasized that these experiences constitute setbacks to their wellbeing.* Four (4) of the respondents said, *we are not happy with our experiences. This disease is more than poison. It makes one constantly sick and unable to engage in hard labour. Men are generally wicked. They purposely would not provide our family needs, so that we continue to be financially dependent.*

The painful thing is that when you complain as a woman, the men will label you as bad and troublesome especially when you refuse to have sexual relationships with them. The problem will be more if you venture to disclose your HIV status to them. Then, they will stigmatize, reject ,and abandon you. They may even threaten to kill you. Using reports from three (3) widows: *we have six children, yet we lost our husbands' property to our brothers' in-law barely one month after the burial of our husbands. When we complained, we were chased out of our matrimonial houses. We reported this to the traditional rulers of our communities, and we were told that nothing can be done to change the situation. That the culture must be respected.*

Discussion:

The fact that a high proportion of the respondents, 85 of 98(86.7%) were denied access to family resources, indicates lack of care and support for women living positively with HIV and AIDS. The finding on lack of care and support was also supported by the responses of the traditional rulers who are of the view that women are not entitled to owe properties in their names when there are males in the family. The fact that a good proportion of the respondents with their children, acted as hired labourers as their means of livelihood, confirms that they lacked care and support from family members. This finding on lack of care and support agrees with that of [3], [6] and is at variance with that of [12], [14] where increased care and support to people living positively with HIV and AIDS from family members were established.

The practice of chasing out 60 of 98 (61.2%) of the respondents from their matrimonial homes and denying them financial assistance is arguably domestic violence. Also, the fact that the traditional rulers, as custodians of culture, could not support the respondents including those widowed to have access to their family resources is another form of violence. The traditional rulers were unyielding in amending the policies that totally allow males ownership to all family resources to the disadvantage of females. This finding agrees with the views of [7] that due to economic scarcity, males after mortgaging family resources are no more willing to financially support femily members as they did in the past.

Sexual risk behaviours were common among the respondents both those resident in the urban and rural areas. Although a good proportion of the respondents, 78 of 98(79.6%) were aware that unprotected sex could increase HIV transmission, yet, half of the respondents 54 of 98 (55.1%) still

engaged in unprotected sex showing that knowledge of how HIV is transmitted is not necessarily a guarantee to encourage HIV prevention. Common reasons given by some of the respondents on why they did not use condom during sex included sex partners disliked for condom use and the fear of being accused of promiscuity. The finding that a good number of the respondents engaged in unprotected sex agrees with that of [2], [12] which found that people living positively with HIV and AIDS engaged in unprotected sex for .fear of stigmatization and rejection, The fact that some respondents took the risk of having sex, without condom reveals the extent to which HIV transmission may be encouraged in the communities.

Good proportions of non-inherited, and divorced/separated respondents had better knowledge of the negative consequences of having unprotected sex than others. It is likely these are among the groups of respondents who practiced abstinence. This group could be the strong willed ones who are determined to reduce HIV transmission in the society despite the fact that they are denied financial and social supports. This shows that non-inheritance and divorced/separated constitute positive factors in HIV and AIDS prevention .

Limitations to the study:

Limitations were encountered during the study. The samples used for the study for both the people living positively with HIV and AIDS and the traditional rulers were small. The study was cross sectional and as such, could not capture all that transpired with the respondents. The data analysed for the study was based on self- reported behaviours from the respondents, and as such, biases may be introduced.

Conclusions:

Denying HIV positive women especially those resident in the communities, rights to inherit family resources could have disturbing effects on their economic empowerment, and sexual life. This denial could inflict hardships and expose HIV positive women to the risk of having unprotected sex for monetary values. If this denial continues, government‘s efforts to reduce HIV prevalence in the society would yield little or no significant result unless government, with the support of the traditional rulers, review the policies that discourage women’s access to family resources.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the followings are recommended:

1. National and State legislatures should extend legal aid support services to HIV positive women particularly to those resident in the rural areas where cultures and norms that prevent women from inheritance rights are very stringent. This recommendation is plausible because only the government can make policies or rules that would compel the traditional rulers to modify the cultures and norms that negatively influence women’s rights to assets transfers. Allowing HIV positive women access to family resources, will increase their economic and social wellbeing , thereby mitigate HIV and AIDS impacts. .

2. Health workers should regularly conduct enlightenment campaign programs that would focus on educating traditional rulers on the health problems of HIV positive women and the roles they could play to assist the group maintain good health

3. The judiciary should update legislations that govern wills so as to ensure increased social and financial supports to widows to enhance their economic empowerment.

4. Traditional rulers should support gender equality where unrestricted opportunities and rights are equally extended to women to inherit assets irrespective of their health and marital statuses.

Competing Interests

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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