



2024 HIV Vaccine Advocacy Academy

16-18 December 2024

Windhoek, Namibia

Supported by:

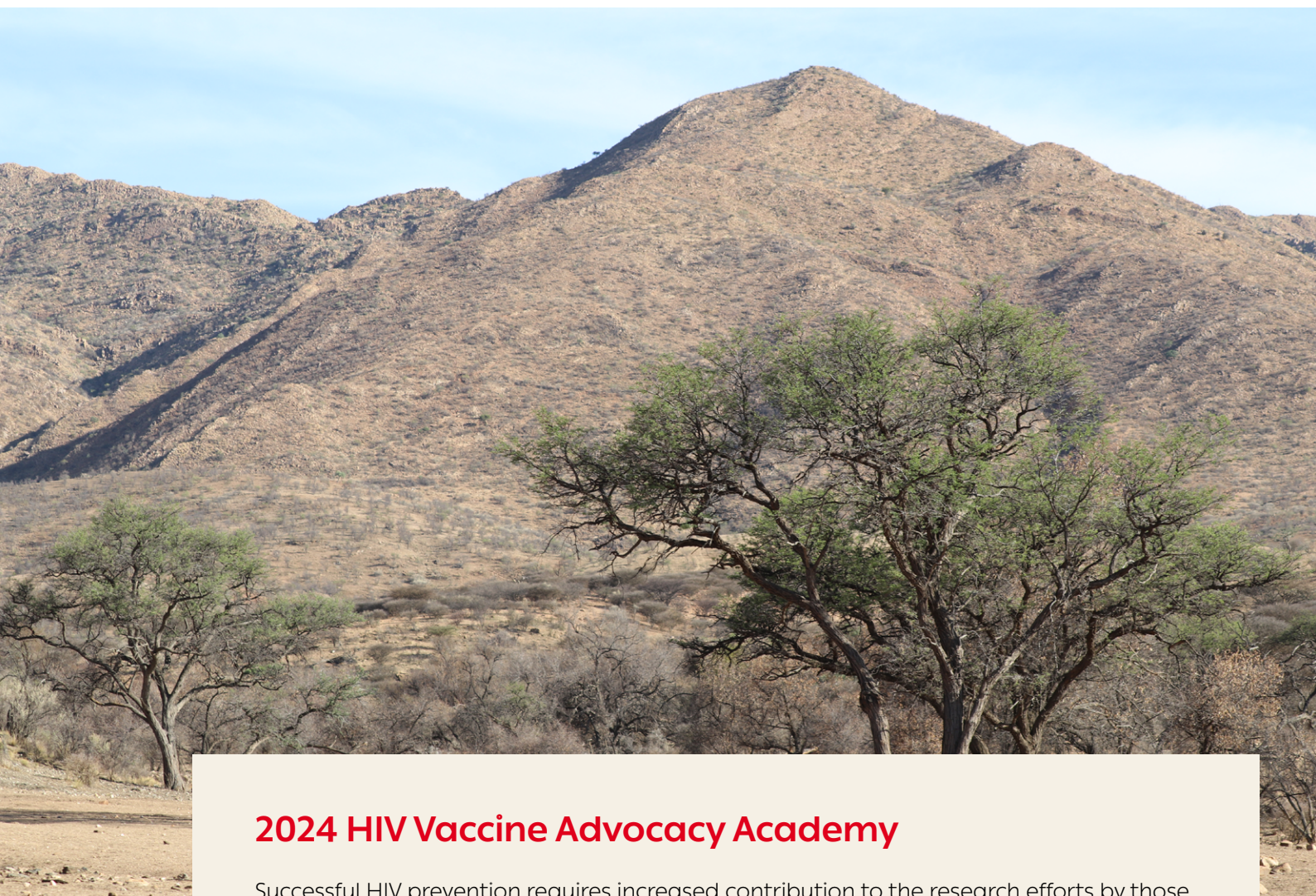
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Introduction

IAS Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise

The Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise of IAS – the International AIDS Society – promotes HIV vaccine development by sharing knowledge, fostering collaboration, prioritizing HIV vaccine research and development (R&D) on the global health agenda, and supporting early-career African researchers and advocates through capacity-building initiatives. It was established in 2003 and became a programme of the IAS in 2018.



2024 HIV Vaccine Advocacy Academy

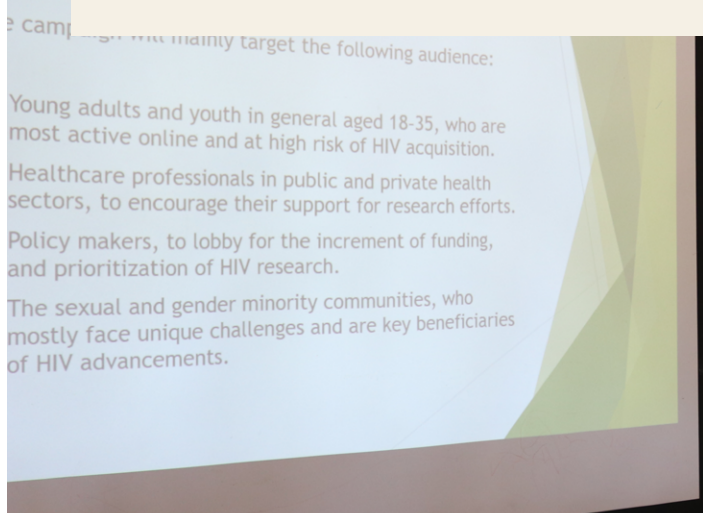
Successful HIV prevention requires increased contribution to the research efforts by those countries and regions that are most affected by the epidemic. Despite tremendous progress in the HIV response, central, eastern, southern and western Africa remain most severely affected, with 25.9 million adults and children living with HIV in 2023 (UNAIDS, 2024). The need for an Africa-centric vaccine and prevention product design is further substantiated in these regions of Africa, where researchers find the most genetically diverse HIV subtype in the world. A safe and effective HIV vaccine would make a significant contribution to controlling the epidemic, particularly in young women, one of the most vulnerable groups who face the greatest disease burden.

In recent years, we have seen the launch of HIV vaccine clinical trials in different African countries. The contribution of multiple sectors in Africa to the development of a safe and effective HIV vaccine cannot be understated.

Engaging with communities is critical to the success of HIV vaccine clinical trials, and our understanding of what constitutes community engagement has evolved considerably over the years. Community engagement in biomedical research has been shown to be foundational to ethically and scientifically rigorous clinical trials involving human participants in low- and middle-income country settings. It involves a bi-directional partnership between community and research stakeholders to inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower each other across the different stages of beneficial research.

To ensure community understanding of the research and lay the groundwork for successful trial conduct and an eventual product roll out, it is essential to develop a long-term, focused, well-coordinated, Africa-initiated and Africa-led HIV vaccine R&D advocacy.

To strengthen the capacity of African advocates and peer educators in HIV vaccine R&D advocacy, the IAS launched the HIV Vaccine Advocacy Academy, focusing on improving the HIV vaccine research literacy and advocacy and engagement skills of advocates and peer educators. The advocacy academy complements two ongoing activities of the IAS Enterprise African Research Network (EARN) of the Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise: the Vaccine Enterprise Mentorship Programme; and HIV Vaccine Science Academy. These two EARN activities provide capacity building to early- to mid-career scientists and support them to establish themselves as independent researchers and team leaders in their host institutions in Africa.



Goals

The purpose of the HIV Vaccine Advocacy Academy is to support the career development of African advocates and peer educators – the fellows – in HIV vaccine R&D advocacy.

The academy is a space where participants interact with leading researchers and advocates in the HIV vaccine R&D field. Participants build their literacy in HIV vaccine research and improve their advocacy and engagement skills to advance the field. Specific objectives of the academy include:

- Expand the network of African advocates working in the HIV vaccine research and related research space.
- Increase participants' capacity and HIV vaccine research literacy to understand and disseminate information on current HIV vaccine research strategies and the barriers to successful prevention within their communities.
- Galvanize support for HIV vaccine R&D from their communities, policy makers, the media and other relevant stakeholders.

Programme

Monday, 16 December: Foundational HIV vaccine science

Day 1 covered foundational science topics that are crucial for understanding HIV, including recent advances in vaccine development. It also provided a platform for participants to get to know each other, interact with faculty members, ask questions and gain a deeper understanding of vaccine R&D.

Time (CAT)	Topic	Speakers
7:30 AM - 8:30 AM	Breakfast	
8:30 AM - 8:35 AM	Welcome	Asli Heitzer , IAS
8:35 AM - 08:45 AM	The Challenge	Roger Tatoud , Origena Consulting, France
08:45 AM - 10:15 AM	Fellow presentations: Part 1	Fellows
10:15 AM - 10:45 AM	Coffee break and networking	
10:45 AM - 12:15 PM	Fellow presentations: Part 2	Fellows
12:15 PM - 12:30 PM	Summary	
12:30 PM - 1:30 PM	Lunch break	
1:30 PM - 1:50 PM	HIV prevention today and why we need an HIV vaccine	Azwidihwi Takalani , Hutchinson Centre Research Institute of South Africa, South Africa
1:50 PM - 2:15 PM	Discussion (Q&A)	
2:15 PM - 2:35 PM	How do vaccines work?	Marianne Mureithi , University of Nairobi, Kenya
2:35 PM - 3:00 PM	Discussion (Q&A)	
3:00 PM - 3:30 PM	Coffee break and networking	
3:30 PM - 3:50 PM	HIV vaccines: Past, present and future	Marianne Mureithi , University of Nairobi, Kenya
3:50 PM - 4:10 PM	The case of passive immunization for the prevention of HIV	Azwidihwi Takalani , Hutchinson Centre Research Institute of South Africa, South Africa
4:10 PM - 5:00 PM	Discussion (Q&A)	Both speakers
5:00 PM - 5:30 PM	Presenting for success	Roger Tatoud , Origena Consulting, France
5:30 PM - 7:00 PM	Free time and networking	
7:00 PM - 8:30 PM	Dinner	

Tuesday, 17 December: Understanding and applying advocacy

Day 2 focused on equipping participants with advocacy skills and knowledge specific to HIV vaccine development, especially in the African context. The workshop and group discussions encouraged active participation and skill building.

Time (CAT)	Topic	Speakers
7:30 AM - 8:25 AM	Breakfast	
8:25 AM - 8:30 AM	Welcome and recap	Asli Heitzer , IAS
8:30 AM - 9:15 AM	Advocacy in context: The CATWOE approach	Roger Tatoud , Origina Consulting, France
09:15 AM - 09:45 AM	Advocating for HIV vaccine R&D – A case study	Ethel Malika , IAVI, Kenya
09:45 AM - 10:00 AM	Discussion (Q&A)	Ethel Malika , IAVI, Kenya
10:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Working with stakeholders	Joyce Ng'ang'a , WACI Health, Kenya
10:30 AM - 11:00 AM	Coffee break and networking	
11:00 AM - 11:30 AM	Demystify HIV vaccine science	Joyce Ng'ang'a , WACI Health, Kenya
11:30 AM - 12:30 PM	Building your case	Joyce Ng'ang'a , WACI Health, Kenya
1:50 PM - 2:15 PM	Lunch break	
2:15 PM - 2:35 PM	Building partnerships and collaborations	Ethel Malika , IAVI, Kenya Joyce Ng'ang'a , WACI Health, Kenya
11:30 AM - 12:30 PM	Individual project work	
1:50 PM - 2:15 PM	Networking session: game drive	All
2:15 PM - 2:35 PM	Dinner	

Wednesday, 18 December: Understanding and applying advocacy

Day 3 built significantly on Day 2 and focused on communications skills-building practice. The aim was to enhance participants' ability on communicating complex vaccine science clearly, storytelling and framing HIV vaccine advocacy compellingly to various audiences. Participants put into practice the skills they built on tailoring messages for different stakeholders.

Time (CAT)	Topic	Speakers
7:30 AM - 8:45 AM	Breakfast	
8:45 AM - 8:50 AM	Welcome and recap	Asli Heitzer , IAS
8:50 AM - 9:00 AM	Persuasive speaking	Roger Tatoud , Origina Consulting, France
09:00 AM - 9:15 AM	The elevator pitch	Roger Tatoud , Origina Consulting, France
09:15 AM - 10:00 AM	Group work on the elevator pitch	
10:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Coffee break and networking	
10:30 AM - 12:00 PM	Individual elevator speech	Fellows
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM	Lunch break	
1:00 PM - 2:30 PM	Fellow presentations: Part 1	Fellows
2:30 PM - 3:00 PM	Short coffee break	
3:00 PM - 4:30 PM	Fellow presentations: Part 2	Fellows
4:30 PM - 5:00 PM	Feedback and reflection	
5:00 PM - 5:05 PM	Ending remarks	Asli Heitzer , IAS
7:00 PM - 8:30 PM	Dinner	

Faculty

The faculty was comprised of renowned HIV vaccine scientists and advocacy experts who delivered presentations on key topics in the programme and supported the fellows in the development of their individual projects.



Azwidihi Takalani

Hutchinson Centre Research Institute of
South Africa, South Africa



Ethel Malika

IAVI, Kenya



Joyce Ng'ang'a

WACI Health, Kenya



Marianne Mureithi

University of Nairobi, Kenya



Roger Tatoud

Origina Consulting, France



"We must simplify the complex vaccine science in a way that the community can understand and, with consistent community advocacy and literacy strategies, we can gain community trust and buy-in for the vaccine."

Adaobi Lisa Olisa

Technical Officer, Gender Integration and Youth Engagement, FHI360

Country of work: Nigeria

What is your motivation to attend the 2024 HIV Vaccine Advocacy Academy?

As an advocate, I strongly believe that an HIV vaccine will be an excellent addition to the current expanding HIV prevention toolbox. Although we have made good progress and advancements in the treatment and prevention of HIV, we continue to see high numbers of new HIV acquisitions, with 1.3 million new acquisitions in 2023 (44% among women globally). Also, some regions and countries are recording rising numbers of new acquisitions. This highlights the need for an HIV vaccine to help prevent new HIV acquisitions (in addition to existing prevention technologies).

I believe that a vaccine will accelerate progress towards achieving HIV epidemic control because vaccines typically provide long-lasting protection and can be given to a wide range of people, which can lead to community immunity. More importantly, vaccines can potentially help eliminate stigma related to the use of existing ARVs. I am learning that there is active ongoing research for an effective HIV vaccine. However, most of these studies are in the very early stages.

This is an excellent time to educate the community to prevent myths, misconceptions and misinformation that can lead to vaccine hesitancy, as we saw during the COVID-19 pandemic. We must simplify the complex vaccine science in a way that the community can understand and, with consistent community advocacy and literacy strategies, we can gain community trust and buy-in for the vaccine, which will in turn help prevent vaccine hesitancy when the vaccines eventually become available. Also, by engaging the community in vaccine research, we can gain insights and perspectives on the needs and preferences of the most affected communities, which can inform research priorities to meet the needs of the communities.

I attended the 2024 IAS Advocacy for HIV Cure Academy and I believe that vaccine and cure research are strongly interrelated through the use of similar technologies like broadly neutralizing antibodies (bnAbs). Therefore, attending this academy provides a unique opportunity to broaden my perspective on vaccine research and strengthen my community literacy and advocacy efforts on both HIV vaccine and cure.

What is your current role and area of work?

I represent Nigeria on the MOSAIC NextGen Squad (NGS), a group of youth advocates from nine African countries that support meaningful youth engagement and gender integration across the PEPFAR/USAID-funded MOSAIC project activities. I also serve as the country focal point for research utilization, knowledge management, and monitoring, evaluation and learning efforts under MOSAIC. Globally, the NGS supports CATALYST, the largest study of its kind, which will provide information to help inform introduction, scale up and sustainability of HIV prevention options. In Nigeria, MOSAIC is collaborating with the government, donors and stakeholders to support the introduction of long-acting injectable cabotegravir. As the youth representative for MOSAIC in Nigeria, I continuously engage with these stakeholders to ensure that we address all the barriers limiting access to these services among adolescents and young people. I also support advocacy to the Federal Ministry of Health to ensure meaningful youth engagement in demand generation for HIV prevention. As a result of this advocacy, in 2022, we launched Gen-N as the national campaign for all HIV interventions targeted at adolescents and young people.

"Advancing HIV vaccine advocacy in Zambia requires us to conduct targeted awareness campaigns in schools, communities and health facilities to educate people about the importance of an HIV vaccine."



Chipo Nalubanda

Director, EmpowerCare Youths
Network Solution

Country of work: Zambia

What is your motivation to attend the 2024 HIV Vaccine Advocacy Academy?

My motivation to attend the academy stems from my deep commitment to advancing HIV prevention and care, particularly among adolescents and young people in rural Zambia. As the Director of EmpowerCare Youths Network Solution (EYNS), I have seen first-hand the challenges faced in addressing HIV stigma, misinformation and barriers to accessing sexual and reproductive health services.

What is your current role and area of work?

EYNS is a nonprofit organization based in Choma, Southern Province, Zambia. As its Director, I lead the strategic planning and implementation of programmes focused on health, education and climate change, with a special emphasis on adolescents and young people. Our core work involves sensitizing and mobilizing communities around sexual and reproductive health (SRH), HIV and AIDS awareness and stigma reduction.

My responsibilities include overseeing programme design, partnership development and community outreach initiatives. I also guide our team in engaging schools and health facilities to ensure access to youth-friendly SRH services and information. Additionally, I collaborate with local and international organizations to implement projects aimed at reducing barriers to healthcare while promoting education and awareness around issues affecting young people. This role allows me to advocate for marginalized youth, ensuring that they have the support and resources needed to make informed decisions about their health and future.



"Being an HIV prevention advocate working in a resource-constrained setting, I believe this can be a huge opportunity for my country and the district."

Chrissy Chabwera Banda

Senior Health Promotion Officer,
Blantyre District Health Office

Country of work: Malawi

What is your motivation to attend the 2024 HIV Vaccine Advocacy Academy?

As someone who has worked for a long time in social and behaviour change, demand creation and health promotion for various health programmes (including HIV), I think there is a need for more focused interventions if we are to end HIV and AIDS as a threat to public health and individual well-being. I expect to learn more about HIV vaccine research and its potential impacts on HIV prevention in Malawi and globally. Coming from a district with a high HIV burden and being an HIV prevention advocate working in a resource-constrained setting, I believe this can be a huge opportunity for my country and the district to advocate for the HIV vaccine as we continue responding to HIV and AIDS.

With this training, I expect to advance my knowledge and strengthen my understanding of the latest HIV vaccine research, which I am very much willing to share with others, including implementing partners and the community.

What is your current role and area of work?

Primarily, my role is to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate demand generation, social behaviour change and health promotion interventions in Blantyre. Specifically, I coordinate trainings of local-level health promotion practitioners in health issues, coordinating development and implementation of all health promotion products and interventions in the district. These include HIV services; promoting and marketing positive health practices; facilitating social mobilization activities; providing for the development of district health personnel involved with implementation of health promotion activities; providing organizational support, resources and technical assistance to community-based health promotion initiatives; and participating in supervising trainers in designing and conducting health education training programmes for various targeted groups based on identified learning needs.

"A vaccine could be a life changer for the men who have sex with men community, and that's why attending the academy is so important to me."

Derrick Omondi

Outreach Worker, Ishtar MSM

Country of work: Kenya



What is your motivation to attend the 2024 HIV Vaccine Advocacy Academy?

I base my motivation to attend the academy mainly on the work I do with the community of men who have sex with men in Nairobi. Throughout my work experience, I have witnessed the impact of HIV on our community members, from health challenges to stigma and discrimination. We've made some progress with prevention interventions like PrEP, but we still face challenges largely due to limited access to resources. A vaccine could be a life changer for the community of men who have sex with men, and that's why attending the academy is so important to me.

This will also be an opportunity to learn about the latest developments in vaccine research and understand the impact it will have on communities. I also see this as an opportunity to bring back knowledge and share it with the people I work with so that we're all equipped with information. I want to be able to advocate for the community of men who have sex with men in Nairobi, making sure that when a vaccine is ready, we have access and aren't left behind. Being part of this academy would enable me to connect with like-minded individuals and, together, make a difference in the response to HIV.

What is your current role and area of work?

I have a team of 15 trained peer educators that I work with. Each peer educator maintains a cohort of 50 peers who must be provided with services, such as health education, sensitization on safer sexual behaviours, HIV/STI testing and treatment, and PrEP/PEP sensitization. All peers are supplied with commodities, such as condoms and water-based lubricants. My task is to make sure that the 750 peers are adequately provided with the services to reduce new HIV acquisitions among men who have sex with men in Nairobi.

Through outreaches, I hold open forum discussions where I sensitize peers on such matters as gender-based violence since most of them are young and it's necessary for them to be informed on such issues. Through these forums, I collect feedback from the peers on the challenges they're facing. Some of the issues that normally arise are intimate partner violence, stigma and discrimination, and drug and substance use. After collecting such information, I'm able to report back to the organization, and the necessary steps are taken. By playing the roles of an activist and a field officer, I aid in the implementation of our pillars: advocacy; research; community development; and service delivery.



"I will engage myself in creating awareness in my community, targeting key populations, policy makers, healthcare providers and district leadership in spreading good news about HIV vaccines rather than misconceptions and myths."

Edison Jjemba

Gender and Key Population Program Manager, Action for Integrated Sustainable Development

Country of work: Uganda

What is your motivation to attend the 2024 HIV Vaccine Advocacy Academy?

As an advocate for key populations and the LGBTQI+ community and a human rights observer and protector, my motivation stems from a number of reasons.

I believe the academy will provide me with an opportunity to be part of the pioneering efforts aimed at reducing new HIV acquisitions among key populations. Following the passing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act in Uganda, the majority of the LGBTQI+ community has been disproportionately affected – it is very hard for them to seek HIV prevention services, such as condoms, lubricants, PrEP, PEP and STI treatment, because of their identity.

I am also looking forward to bringing back to Uganda the knowledge I acquire during the academy, denouncing the myths that key populations and other people have about HIV vaccines. I will engage myself in creating awareness in my community, targeting key populations, policy makers, healthcare providers and district leadership in spreading good news about the vaccine, instead of misconceptions and myths. I believe trainers will equip me with knowledge and skills on how best I can engage key populations so that they understand the gold in the vaccine and embrace it.

What is your current role and area of work?

I am the Gender and Key Population Program Manager at Action for Integrated Sustainable Development. This followed my attendance of AIDS 2024 where I gained and shared experience with my employers and fellow staff on return. We came up with new strategies of promoting our Key Population Program to ensure effective service delivery and human rights observance. We have so far enrolled 288 people from key populations in the project, "Igniting Our Potential".

"As an HIV advocate, it's important for me to stay knowledgeable on the latest updates regarding HIV, whether it's research or already approved methods."



Fanyana Ngubane

Prevention CAB (Community Advisory Board)
Chairperson, Wits RHI (Reproductive Health
and HIV Institute)

Country of work: South Africa

What is your motivation to attend the 2024 HIV Vaccine Advocacy Academy?

I'm hoping to expand my knowledge about the latest HIV prevention technologies, the advantages and disadvantages they bring, and how these new HIV prevention technologies are accepted in different countries. I also want to continue to support the global response to HIV and prevention research and gain more skills to advocate for HIV.

As an HIV advocate, it's important for me to stay knowledgeable on the latest updates regarding HIV, whether it's research or already approved methods. This will increase my strengths and skills in fighting for social changes, transforming public perceptions and attitudes, modifying behaviour and mobilization. I will be able to draw more attention and give informed knowledge to critical issues like HIV prevention and treatment, and then win the support of key constituencies. I will deepen my knowledge about how to apply public pressure on leaders and public officials, hold visible public engagement with government institutions and officials responsible for service delivery, increase public awareness of community issues, and increase the scrutiny of government officials and procedures. I will provide accurate and relevant information to communities, promote greater understanding around problematic issues affecting communities, create an opportunity for action, and effect change and improvement, which will build a foundation for a better HIV management.

What is your current role and area of work?

I am a Wits RHI Prevention Community Advisory Board (CAB) Chairperson with over six years' experience in health advocacy, concentrating on HIV prevention. My role requires me to effectively lead my CAB in stakeholder engagement; this includes scheduled board meetings, conferences, webinars, seminars and community engagement programmes. My duties during community engagements mostly involve tackling myths and misconceptions about HIV, doing clinical research and educating communities about how to better tackle health challenges.

Furthermore, I'm responsible for making sure that communities' points of view are listened to and for liaising with the WITS RHI GPP team if there are any issues to be addressed.



"This opportunity aligns beautifully with my commitment to public health and LGBTQ+ rights, empowering me to create meaningful change that resonates deeply in my community."

Festus Mckeen

Project Coordinator, White Rose Alliance

Country of work: Liberia

What is your motivation to attend the 2024 HIV Vaccine Advocacy Academy?

Attending the academy will transform my advocacy journey. This experience will not be about only gaining knowledge. It will develop my skills in advocating for HIV prevention initiatives. I will have the chance to connect with a community of like-minded advocates and professionals who share the same passion. Such an experience will be inspiring, opening opportunities for collaboration that can strengthen my work and broaden my impact.

I believe the 2024 HIV Vaccine Advocacy Academy will keep me informed about the latest HIV research and provide the insights I need to support my community. I will be equipped to address the specific needs of the communities I serve, ensuring that they receive the best possible support. The knowledge and skills I gain will enhance my local work, particularly with initiatives like the Global Reach-II/Jhpiego Community PrEP project. I can apply what I learn in ways that make a tangible difference in my community.

I look forward to leaving the academy feeling strengthened, with fresh perspectives and renewed passion for my advocacy. This opportunity aligns beautifully with my commitment to public health and LGBTQ+ rights, empowering me to create meaningful change that resonates deeply in my community.

What is your current role and area of work?

I am currently involved in professional and community work focused on advocating for LGBTQ+ rights and improving public health in Liberia. Professionally, I support the programme departments at White Rose Alliance, where I help strengthen initiatives that serve marginalized communities. In my community, I volunteer as a bisexual and community mobilizer, leading awareness campaigns and organizing support groups to empower LGBTQ+ individuals.

As Project Coordinator, I prepare weekly and monthly work plans to guide the implementation of the Global Reach-II/Jhpiego Community PrEP project activities in line with meeting indicators and compliance with standards and procedures to achieve results. I prepare weekly and monthly reports for review by the Executive Director and validate them for submission. I ensure that all programme activity requests are prepared on time to meet implementation timelines. I develop and regularly update information about people, partners, institutions, organizations and key populations in connection with the project.

"I am determined to contribute to the implementation of effective HIV prevention strategies that empower individuals to take control of their health and build a future free from the burden of HIV."



Gabriel Obiero

Program Manager, AGE Solutions for International Development

Country of work: Nigeria

What is your motivation to attend the 2024 HIV Vaccine Advocacy Academy?

As Program Lead at AGE Solutions, my motivation to attend the academy is rooted in a profound commitment to ending the HIV epidemic. Having witnessed the devastating impact of HIV on individuals, families and communities, I am driven by a sense of urgency to explore innovative solutions that can break the cycle of transmission and improve the lives of those affected.

An HIV vaccine could revolutionize prevention efforts, particularly in underserved communities where access to healthcare and information is limited. By attending the academy, I seek to gain a comprehensive understanding of the latest advancements in HIV vaccine research, development and advocacy. I am eager to learn from experts in the field and explore strategies to accelerate the path towards a safe and effective vaccine.

I am passionate about ensuring equitable access to healthcare, including HIV prevention and treatment. The academy offers an invaluable opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals and build a network of advocates who share my commitment to social justice and health equity. By participating, I hope to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to advocate for policies and programmes that prioritize the needs of vulnerable populations and promote the equitable distribution of an HIV vaccine.

Ultimately, my goal is to use the insights gained from the academy to drive meaningful change in my community and beyond. I am determined to contribute to the implementation of effective HIV prevention strategies that empower individuals to take control of their health and build a future free from the burden of HIV.

What is your current role and area of work?

As Program Lead at AGE Solutions, I oversee HIV prevention and treatment programmes in underserved communities. My responsibilities include managing awareness campaigns, community outreach and behaviour change communication initiatives targeting vulnerable populations. I collaborate with community leaders and healthcare providers to ensure that prevention messages are culturally sensitive and reach those who are most vulnerable.

Additionally, I manage HIV treatment programmes, ensuring timely access to antiretroviral therapy (ART) and promoting adherence. I lead capacity-building efforts for healthcare workers and work with local health facilities to strengthen the continuum of care. My role also involves monitoring programme performance using data-driven approaches to ensure quality service delivery and continuous improvement. A key focus of my work is on reducing stigma and advocating for equitable access to care.



"I see an urgent need to integrate vaccine advocacy into existing HIV initiatives."

Jimmy Ssendendo

Programs Manager,
Uganda Young Positives

Country of work: Uganda

What is your motivation to attend the 2024 HIV Vaccine Advocacy Academy?

My motivation to attend the academy stems from my commitment to advancing HIV prevention and treatment among young people in Uganda. With extensive experience leading advocacy projects, including the USAID HIV Prevention Social Media Project and BLOOM Project, I see an urgent need to integrate vaccine advocacy into existing HIV initiatives. Attending the academy will provide me with specialized knowledge and practical skills to advocate for HIV vaccine research and development more effectively.

This opportunity will also enable me to engage with global leaders in HIV vaccine advocacy, facilitating the creation of strategic partnerships that are vital for scaling vaccine-related advocacy efforts in Uganda and beyond. By participating, I hope to amplify the voices of young people living with HIV and ensure that their needs and perspectives are considered in vaccine research and policy formulation.

Ultimately, this training will strengthen my ability to champion the cause of an HIV vaccine and support a long-term vision of a world free from HIV.

What is your current role and area of work?

As the Programs Manager at Uganda Young Positives, I oversee multiple youth-centred HIV advocacy projects aimed at improving service delivery and reducing HIV-related stigma and discrimination. I am also the Lead Project Coordinator for the BLOOM Project in Kyenjojo District, which focuses on supporting young mothers living with HIV and preventing vertical HIV transmission. Additionally, I lead the USAID-funded HIV Prevention Social Media Project, which is ongoing across all urban centres in Uganda and has so far reached over 76 million people.

My role encompasses programme design, stakeholder engagement and capacity building to enhance the quality of life for young people living with HIV. I manage partnerships and lead advocacy efforts to address barriers to HIV care and treatment, with a particular focus on adolescent boys and young men. My work includes reporting, project management and developing strategic plans to ensure effective project implementation and sustainability.

"I see an urgent need to integrate vaccine advocacy into existing HIV initiatives."



Juliet Obiajulu Ifechukwu

Program Manager, African Network of Adolescent and Young Persons Development

Country of work: Nigeria

What is your motivation to attend the 2024 HIV Vaccine Advocacy Academy?

Nigeria still has very high numbers of new HIV acquisitions among adolescents and young people. There were 18,000 new acquisitions among adolescents and young people (15-24 years) in 2021, and 70% (14,000) of these were among adolescent girls and young women. Gender and other inequalities, along with violence, stigma, discrimination and harmful laws/practices, sabotage the ability of adolescent girls and young women to protect themselves from HIV.

Even when I went through school as a nurse, I believed that an innovative biomedical tool was the game changer to achieving HIV zero acquisitions. That is why I felt so overwhelmed when the injectable PrEP was introduced in the world and the pilot study began in Nigeria. It made me ask: what about an HIV vaccine? Only an HIV vaccine will cover such gaps and curb further transmission. I also believe that the vaccine will work better for these populations in the face of the barriers and issues they face as usually vaccines are effective for comparatively longer periods than most disease prevention methods.

My wish is, therefore, to join the advocacy academy, using my position at different levels, including engaging with the Nigerian Ambassador for She Decides 25x25 to influence advocacy for an HIV vaccine in the country. However, for me to effectively join advocacy efforts, I need to be equipped with the right knowledge and skills.

What is your current role and area of work?

I am currently a program manager for the African Network of Adolescent and Young Persons Development (ANAYD) in my state. ANAYD is a host organization implementing "Her Voice Fund" in Nigeria with support from Y+ I facilitate the process of this project in my country, which aims to give adolescent girls and young women a voice in decisions that affect their health, including taking ownership of driving and shaping the HIV response in Nigeria. At the country level, our shared focus is to unite science, talent and technology to get ahead of a leading chronic infectious disease, such as HIV, through empowering adolescent girls and young women, especially those living with disability, to play a vital role in a greater health impact.

I also engage with the stakeholders and have led various peer facilitations collecting data on HIV knowledge, violence and sexual behaviour. The data is shared with various stakeholders to raise awareness facing the girl child, which informs future policy and developing interventions towards HIV prevention. My other role, as a licensed nurse, includes rendering healthcare services to key populations living with HIV.



"I facilitate empowerment and advocacy online session and peer-to-peer support for the network members, providing them with treatment, prevention and positive living."

Sekgabo Seselamarumo

Founding Peer Leader/Let Youth Lead Advocate, Sentebale

Country of work: Botswana

What is your motivation to attend the 2024 HIV Vaccine Advocacy Academy?

My motivation to attend the academy comes from my passion to advance HIV vaccine research in Africa and my ongoing commitment for HIV advocacy as a young person living openly with HIV who has been on treatment for close to 21 years. This year, I was selected to be part of the 2024 Vaccine Enterprise Mentorship Programme, which paired a journalist and CAB member from Zambia with me as my mentee. She gave me first-hand experience by engaging in content creation using digital media in communicating scientific research to diverse audiences while not leaving anyone behind, like those who can't read or write, and advocating for HIV vaccine development. This mentorship upskilled me to translate complex vaccine research jargon into accessible language for communities, especially young people.

Attending this academy will sharpen my knowledge of HIV vaccine research, building on what I gained from the HIV Cure Academy; it will also allow me to collaborate, engage and learn with leading experts and advocates from across Africa in building stronger advocacy strategies that I can implement in my community.

Being a Fellow of the AVAC HIV Prevention Clinical Trials Academy (2024) has built a strong foundation in understanding ethical considerations in HIV prevention research and innovative trial designs. This is a great foundation to learn more about the latest HIV vaccine development and ongoing clinical trials, as well as breakthroughs to share with my international online community. I will also gain skills in advocating for more inclusive and community-centred clinical trials in Africa.

What is your current role and area of work?

I am the Content Developer and Presenter (radio division) for the Ministry of Education & Skills Development. I develop curriculum-based radio programmes and present them live for primary school curriculum on all the subjects they are doing across the country. I develop fun and engaging educational content aligning with the national educational standards, making sure all learners have access to these supplementary learning resources.

I am a Let Youth Lead Advocate with Sentebale Botswana, where I have co-led initiatives such as Radio Positive and engaged with Members of Parliament, UN agencies and policymakers on issues affecting young people living with HIV. I am also a radio co-host for a radio programme called Radio Positive where we talk about health, wellness and education issues. I also serve as a Founding Peer Leader for Botswana's first Network of Young People Living with HIV, where I have mobilized and recruited over 50 young people living with HIV using social media. I facilitate empowerment and advocacy online sessions and peer-to-peer support for network members, providing them with treatment, prevention and positive living.

"My goal is to empower communities with accurate information, foster trust in scientific research, and contribute to the momentum for African-led HIV vaccine advocacy."



Sinethemba Manuyakhulu

Advocate and Community Liaison Officer,
Desmond Tutu Health Foundation

Country of work: South Africa

What is your motivation to attend the 2024 HIV Vaccine Advocacy Academy?

My motivation to attend the academy stems from a deep commitment to advancing HIV vaccine advocacy in Africa. As an Advocate and Community Liaison Officer at the Desmond Tutu Health Foundation, I am on the frontline of engaging communities in HIV research and prevention efforts. Attending the academy will provide me with the knowledge and skills to enhance my advocacy strategies, especially in communicating complex scientific information to diverse audiences.

I am eager to learn from leading experts in the field, network with fellow advocates, and gain insights into the latest HIV vaccine research developments. The opportunity to engage in this specialized training will enable me to better advocate for vaccine acceptance and participation in the communities I serve. My goal is to empower communities with accurate information, foster trust in scientific research, and contribute to the momentum for African-led HIV vaccine advocacy. This academy represents a critical step in my journey to becoming a more effective advocate, capable of driving change and influencing the future of HIV prevention in my country and beyond.

What is your current role and area of work?

As an Advocate and Community Liaison Officer at the Desmond Tutu Health Foundation, I am responsible for leading community engagement efforts, particularly in advocating for HIV research and vaccine development. My role involves designing, implementing and evaluating community outreach strategies to educate and mobilize communities around HIV prevention and research. I coordinate HIV education initiatives, facilitate Community Advisory Board (CAB) meetings, and work closely with fieldworkers to ensure the dissemination of accurate information.

Additionally, I collaborate with research teams to integrate community perspectives into study protocols, ensuring that research is culturally sensitive and ethically sound. I am deeply involved in promoting research participation and retention through strategic community engagement, leveraging my skills in communication and stakeholder relations. My work includes training staff on effective community engagement practices and fostering strong relationships with community members, NGOs and local health institutions to amplify our advocacy efforts. Through my role, I aim to bridge the gap between research and the community, ensuring that the voices of those most affected by HIV are heard and integrated into the research process.



"I look forward to travelling back to my country and sharing the knowledge I have gained."

Shanta Ndowah

Director of Programmes, Women and Girl Child Empowerment Against Stigmatization

Country of work: Cameroon

What is your motivation to attend the 2024 HIV Vaccine Advocacy Academy?

I am passionate about increasing awareness in my community and equipping myself with the latest information to advocate for those affected by HIV. This academy presents an invaluable opportunity to deepen my understanding of vaccine research, public health initiatives, and advocacy techniques that can help shape better policies and outreach efforts.

I am also eager to connect with like-minded individuals, researchers, and advocates who are dedicated to the HIV response. Collaborating with experts in the field will allow me to gain new perspectives, share experiences, and develop more effective ways to engage my community. I believe that fostering strong networks will empower me to create sustainable change and contribute meaningfully to the HIV response.

I hope to enhance my communication and leadership skills through this academy. Being able to translate complex scientific information into accessible knowledge for diverse audiences is important to my advocacy work. I want to ensure that those at risk or living with HIV have accurate information, access to resources, and the support they need. By attending this academy, I aim to become a stronger voice in HIV education and contribute to reducing stigma and misinformation on HIV vaccine R&D.

I am excited about the opportunity to grow as an advocate and make a meaningful difference in the fight against HIV.

What is your current role and area of work?

I organise all activities in the field and weekly schedule. I ensure that all designated areas of work, outreach and activities are successful. This includes the distribution of anti-retroviral drugs and holding seminars and workshops with those who are living with HIV

Aside from holding seminars, I also provide educational programs. These sessions provide essential information about HIV and AIDS, treatment adherence, and prevention methods. I coordinate speakers, arrange venues, and promote community participation to maximize the impact of these initiatives. I also collaborate with healthcare professionals and advocacy groups to develop engaging content that empowers individuals with knowledge and resources to make informed decisions about their health.

In addition to these core responsibilities, I also serve as director of programs solely with Path Way To Psychological Support Care. This is an international organisation that gives counselling and financial support to those living with HIV. My duty involves conducting field visits, assessing the unique needs of different communities, and ensuring that interventions are tailored to their specific challenges. I work to bridge gaps in healthcare access by identifying undeserved populations and implementing targeted support programs.

Overall, my work is centered on ensuring that all outreach efforts are effective, timely, and beneficial to the communities we serve. Through careful planning, collaboration, and adaptability, I contribute to improving healthcare access and empowering individuals with the knowledge and resources they need. My role requires strong organizational skills, problem-solving abilities, and a commitment to making a meaningful difference in public health.

"I am particularly interested in ensuring that the voices of marginalized populations are represented in vaccine advocacy efforts."



Tanaka Mukuhwa

Provincial Youth Focal Point, Zimbabwe
National Network of People Living with HIV

Country of work: Zimbabwe

What is your motivation to attend the 2024 HIV Vaccine Advocacy Academy?

As a young person living with HIV and a disability, my motivation to attend the academy is multifaceted and deeply rooted in both personal and collective aspirations. Firstly, engaging with the academy presents a unique opportunity to enhance my understanding of the scientific, social and ethical dimensions of HIV vaccine development. This knowledge is crucial not only for my personal empowerment, but also for advocating effectively in my community.

As an individual who navigates the complexities of living with both HIV and a disability, I am particularly interested in ensuring that the voices of marginalized populations are represented in vaccine advocacy efforts. Attending the academy will enable me to connect with like-minded peers and experts, fostering a collaborative environment where we can share experiences and strategies for advocacy.

Additionally, the academy will equip me with the skills to engage in policy discussions and community outreach, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive dialogue around HIV prevention and treatment. By participating, I aim to amplify the importance of accessible healthcare solutions for all, particularly those living with intersecting identities. This experience will not only enrich my advocacy efforts, but also empower me to inspire others facing similar challenges.

What is your current role and area of work?

I work with Zvandiri, a community-based organization in Zimbabwe, which provides community-based prevention, treatment, care and support for children, adolescents and young people living with HIV. I work as a Community Adolescent Treatment Supporter, supporting children, adolescents and young people living with HIV to adhere well to treatment, tracking defaulters, facilitating contact tracing and testing, leading support groups, offering counselling, offering mental health services through screening for common mental health conditions, and referring. I also make sure that young people living with HIV have access to essential SRH services, information and resources to support their knowledge.



"There is a significant need for increased community engagement and advocacy, particularly because much of the current research is in the early phases."

Towera Msiska

Health Promoter, Pakachere Institute of Health and Development Communication

Country of work: Malawi

What is your motivation to attend the 2024 HIV Vaccine Advocacy Academy?

My motivation for attending the academy stems from my passion as an emerging biomedical HIV prevention advocate. Over the years, I have invested in my growth, learning about current and upcoming HIV prevention products. I have done this by attending the Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI) and engaging with advocates through the Clinical Trial Design Academy.

From what I've learned, there is a significant need for increased community engagement and advocacy, particularly because much of the current research is in the early phases. I believe the HIV Vaccine Advocacy Academy aligns well with my work, which involves translating HIV prevention science to the communities I serve. For instance, oral PrEP was introduced in Malawi in 2020 and CAB-PrEP was rolled out in early March 2024, including in the sites where I work. However, there are challenges, especially around misinformation about oral PrEP and CAB-PrEP. Already, some people mistakenly believe that injectable PrEP is a vaccine.

Attending the HIV Vaccine Advocacy Academy would give me the opportunity to deepen my knowledge and empower me to address misinformation surrounding HIV prevention products. In my day-to-day work, I interact closely with the community, and there is a clear gap in knowledge about HIV prevention and treatment, as well as a need for locally driven solutions. I believe such solutions are more sustainable and impactful.

I aspire to help build communities that are well-informed and connected to emerging technologies and scientific advances in HIV. The academy will offer me the opportunity to learn about cutting-edge science in HIV vaccines and enable me to effectively communicate this knowledge to both my community and my colleagues.

What is your current role and area of work?

I work as an Outreach Worker supporting adolescent girls and young women and sex workers in a PEPFAR- and USAID-supported HIV prevention project aimed at preventing HIV and improving the quality of life for people living with HIV. I collaborate directly with the community, including DREAMS Ambassadors, peer educators, peer navigators and mobilizers. The community cadres I support facilitate HIV prevention clubs, mobilize adolescent girls and young women and sex workers to access information and HIV services, and assist with screening, identifying and reporting gender-based violence, as well as making referrals for needed services.

A key part of my job involves advocating for youth-friendly services with healthcare providers at facilities in my catchment area, advocating for access to community delivery platforms for HIV prevention services, and working with communities to safeguard the rights of adolescents and young women. Over the past four years, I have advocated for biomedical HIV prevention services, including oral and injectable PrEP, both of which my organization delivers through community-based platforms.

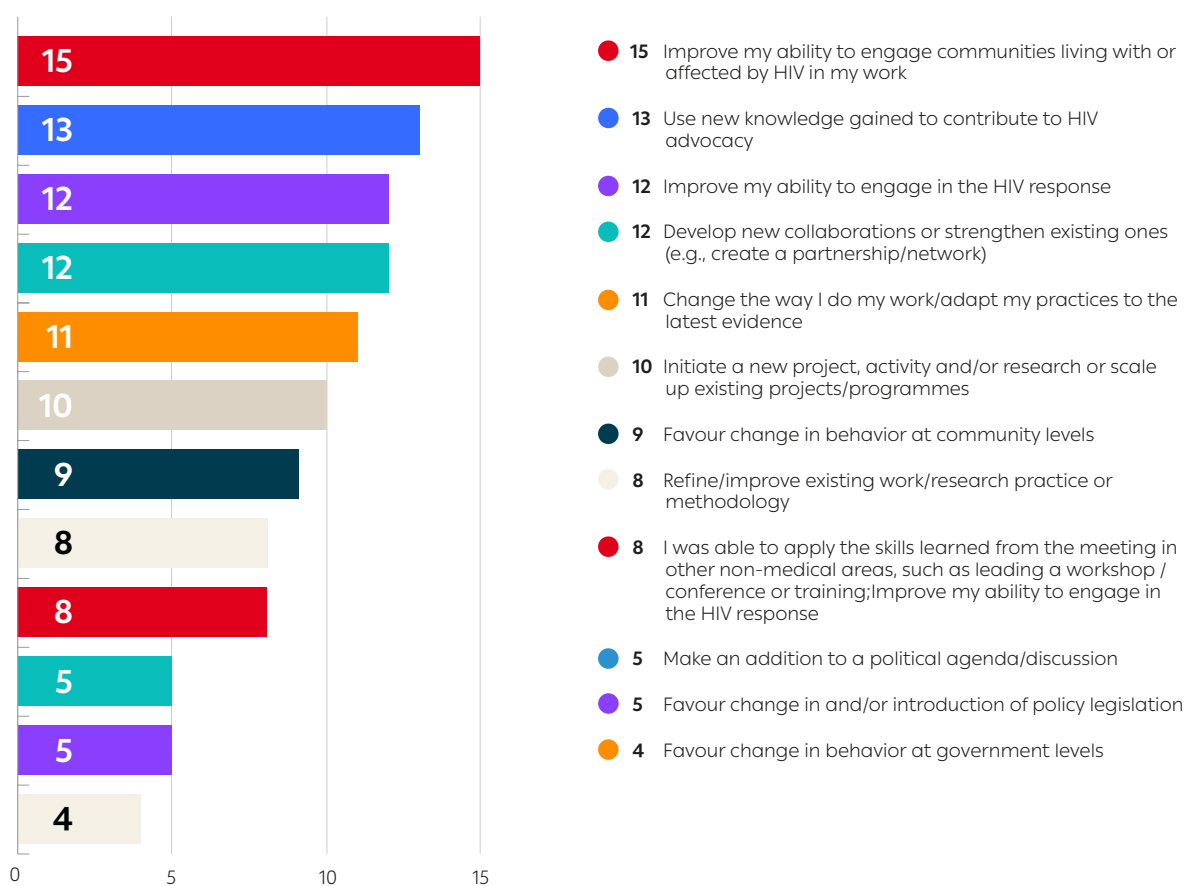
Survey results

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"The 2024 HIV Vaccine Advocacy Academy has equipped me with the valuable tools and knowledge I need to make a real difference in my work. I plan to strengthen community engagement by sharing accurate, evidence-based information about HIV vaccines. By building understanding and trust, I hope to inspire more people to get involved in vaccine advocacy. I also want to launch a programme to educate key populations about HIV vaccine research and its importance. This will empower communities with knowledge and give them a stronger voice in advocacy and decision making."

Survey respondent

Attending this academy led me to ...



How do you plan on implementing what you have learned in the academy in your work?

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"The 2024 HIV Vaccine Advocacy Academy has equipped me with the valuable tools and knowledge I need to make a real difference in my work. I plan to strengthen community engagement by sharing accurate, evidence-based information about HIV vaccines. By building understanding and trust, I hope to inspire more people to get involved in vaccine advocacy. I also want to launch a programme to educate key populations about HIV vaccine research and its importance. This will empower communities with knowledge and give them a stronger voice in advocacy and decision making."

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"I'm going to disseminate information on the lessons learnt at this advocacy academy through community gatherings and workshops I'm going to attend."

How valuable were the academy sessions?

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"When it comes to the exchange of expertise, I was very pleased by the way knowledge was shared. Furthermore, I was thrilled by the way everyone was open to communication with each other, including the faculty members and the organizers.."

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"The academy was highly engaging and provided a unique platform for gaining evidence-based knowledge and practical skills. The sessions on community engagement and policy advocacy were particularly impactful, equipping me with tools to drive meaningful change."



Find out more:
Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise