

**For Immediate Release:**

17:00, AEST - Wednesday 19 September 2018 - Sydney, Australia

## **Understanding Undetectable=Untransmissible (U=U) for Women Living with HIV**

[ASHM](#) is delighted to host the launch of a new global resource from [ICASO](#) on what it means for women living with HIV and their understanding of what an undetectable HIV viral load means in relation to being unable to transmit HIV (U=U).

The science behind the [U=U message](#) is unequivocal and provides clear evidence that we can reduce the anxiety related to the sexual transmission of HIV with confidence if a person living with HIV maintains an undetectable viral load.

“This resource explains why it is so important to understand what the ‘U=U’ message means specifically for women” says Heather Elis, Chair of [Positive Women Victoria](#), “The experiences and needs of individual women living with HIV are hugely diverse and the personal stories shared here from women living with HIV give reason for optimism. But there still remains important questions that need to be answered to make the U=U message relevant, understandable and more meaningful to women, particularly around breastfeeding.”

Following on from the launch of the [U=U community brief](#) last year, ICASO has been working with a number of communities of people living with HIV to better understand how the message of U=U is being understood and applied to their lives.

“U=U is about so much more than just reducing the risk of transmission of HIV through sex” says Sarah Feagan, Board Director with [NAPWHA](#) “it is radically redefining how we see ourselves as people living with HIV and even more importantly, how others perceive us. U=U is helping reduce the fear and prejudice that underpins HIV stigma.”

This community brief captures the voices of women from around the world living with HIV who articulate the intensely personal experiences of pregnancy, motherhood and infant feeding as well as some of the nuances around sexuality, access, equity and gender which exist in the lives of women living with HIV.

“Our goal was to ask women living with HIV about their understanding and experiences related to the U=U messaging to date, to not only answer questions, but to also raise other important issues that require further deliberation, consultation and conversation” says [Jessica Whitbread](#), one of the authors of the brief.

Please join us for the launch of the resource along with a panel of women living with HIV from across Australia at the 2018 Australasian HIV&AIDS Conference.

Wednesday, 26 September 2018  
[Sydney Masonic Centre, Conference & Function Centre](#)  
66 Goulburn Street, Sydney  
Tuscan Room  
12:40 – 1:00 AEST

**For more information on the resource contact:**

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**For more information on the 2018 Australasian HIV&AIDS Conference contact:**

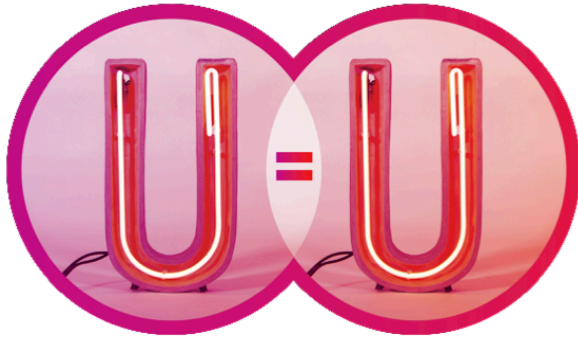
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*---Selected excerpts from the resource follows---*

# Understanding U=U for women living with HIV

## ICASO Community Brief

September 2018



**icaso**  
until we end aids

September 2018

Dear Reader

The U=U movement is transformative . . . so profound in its implication and impact but so simple in its concept. And women - all women everywhere - too must benefit from this concept.

Concepts only bring benefits when they are embraced and implemented.

I am hopeful that U=U will in the next few years pervade every area of women's' lives, every care givers' attitudes and practice and every policy makers' decisions.

We have known for some time now that women who are on antiretroviral therapy and have undetectable viral loads can, if they wish, safely conceive, carry to term, deliver and breastfeed their babies free of anxiety.

Similarly, if they or their intimate partner have undetectable viral loads then sexual intimacy can be enjoyed without fear or reproach.

The robust science that has brought strong evidence to support this is to be celebrated. More than ever before, we now have within our hands the opportunity to counter both perceived and experienced stigma and really embrace the fact that when individuals know their status, link to antiretroviral therapy and become virally suppressed then life can return to normal in the fullest sense.

I commend to you this resource and I applaud all of those involved in its creation.

**Linda-Gail Bekker, MBChB, DTMH, DCH, FCP(SA), PhD**

Professor of Medicine and Deputy Director, Desmond Tutu HIV Centre, Institute of Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine, University of Cape Town, South Africa

"U=U is the future, [if we can talk about it in its totality] it can liberate women from discrimination and from laws around HIV transmission."

KENYA



## Understanding U=U for women living with HIV

### SCIENCE

The lives of women\* living with HIV must be included in the development of the scientific evidence that supports U=U.

### SEXUAL HEALTH

Women\* living with HIV have the right to the express their sexuality and to have sex in ways that feel good to them.

### PREGNANCY

The concept of U=U was proven in the bodies of women\* living with HIV seeking to avoid vertical transmission. This history must be honoured and respected.

### IMPACT

U=U impacts women\* living with HIV in multiple ways and all of these must be appreciated and addressed.

### LAW

All laws that criminalize women\* living with HIV must end.

### CONVERSATIONS

U=U provides a platform to talk about gender and HIV.

### POWER

U=U needs to support women's rights and gender equality.

### TREATMENT

Women\* living with HIV must have access to the full range of treatment options that exist both for themselves and their families.

### DIFFERENTIAL ACCESS

Women\* living with HIV experience access to treatment and care differently around the world. The benefits of U=U will never be fully realized until the inequity of access is addressed and solved.

### BREASTFEEDING

Women\* living with HIV must be supported to make the best choices regarding infant feeding. Including more research on breastfeeding and vertical transmission.

### SURVEILLANCE

The undue scrutiny and control over the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women\* living with HIV must stop.

### INFORMED CHOICES

U=U has demonstrated that knowledge is power. Women\* living with HIV have the right to the best information available so they can make decisions for themselves and their families.