Good morning. My name is Faith Akiki, and I am a member of The Network of People Living with HIV and AIDS in Uganda. It is an honor to speak to you on behalf of the participants of a "Focus on Women", a Community Conference for Women and their Allies, an official satellite conference of this important Global Strategies Meeting. On behalf of all the participants, I would like to thank the organizers of this conference, particularly Dr. Art Ammann and Professor Francis Mmiro for their support for this meeting. We would also like to acknowledge the government of Uganda for inviting this conference to take place in Uganda. Great thanks to the supporters of A Focus on Women - Global Strategies, The Harvard AIDS Institute, The Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, the John M. Lloyd Foundation, Boehringer Ingelheim, Schering, and Bristol-Myers Squibb. Thanks also to the Ugandan organizations and individuals who worked tirelessly to make this conference happen- including Milly Katana, Scovia Kasolo, Debbie Serwadda, and Jane Nabalonzi and the leaders and members of NACWOLA, TASO, THETA, Hope After Rape, NGEN+, NAWOU, as well as the organizers from the United States, Angela Garcia of Project Inform, Emily Bass, Anne Christine d'Adesky, Rebecca Denison of WORLD and Gregg Gonsalves. We are also grateful to the various nurses, doctors, hospitals and clinics that cared for our participants during the conference, to the staff of the Hotel Africana, and, of course, to all the participants including women, like myself, who traveled from up country to take part in this important event.

Our meeting was collaboration between two conferences -Focus on Women and the "Conference on Global Strategies for the Prevention of HIV Transmission from Mothers to Infants." And we would like to thank all the scientists and researchers who spoke at our workshops throughout the week.

The participants of "A Focus on Women" support the Kampala Call for Action, and applaud its efforts. We would also like to take it a step further. I am here this morning to deliver to you our declaration- a "Declaration from A Focus on Women" Kampala, Uganda 2001.
Declaration of "A Focus on Women" at the Closing of the 3rd Global Strategies for Prevention of MTCT 9-13th September, 2001, Kampala, Uganda

We call upon doctors, researchers, governments, and world health organizations to:

1) Acknowledge the crucial role of HIV positive people and their families in the effort to fight this epidemic. Without HIV positive people, researchers cannot do their work. That's one reason why you must work to keep us alive. We are also the experts in our communities about how HIV infection affects individuals and their families. We should be trained as lay counselors, trainers, and program implementers - and should sit on Community Advisory Boards for all research efforts, including research on mother to child prevention options. Today, we call on the government of Uganda to create a mechanism for community communication with the Ministry of Health about its plans for implementation of PMTCT, and to involve HIV positive individuals and organizations in decision making about how these programs are designed and introduced throughout the country.

2) We have heard throughout the week about nevirapine and other preventive PMTCT regimens. We call upon the world to acknowledge that you cannot talk about prevention without treatment. You must address the numbers of people who are already infected. Health care is a human right that extends to all people, including those who are HIV positive. Women are no incubators for babies. We deserve treatment in our own right. Furthermore, treatment of women may be the most effective way to accomplish the goal of reducing mother to infant transmission of HIV and keeping our children and our partners alive.

3) We call upon all present to take this message home with them: As women we are capable of taking medicines. In fact, people at the grass roots level are so anxious to have these things that they will even adopt them better than educated people. We have heard you talk about difficulties in getting men and women to accept testing and counseling. The moment that you say there is treatment, we will come out. With treatment and education, we can manage these regimens - as can every man, woman and child who need them in Africa and around the world.

4) HIV is not only a medical condition. There are many social services and supports that must be put in place. We call on the government of Uganda and international health organizations to work with grass roots women and HIV positive groups on the following key goals:

- Economic, social and political empowerment of women.
- Implementation of strict measures against gender based violence, including rape and domestic violence, and child sexual abuse.
- Promotion of peace and good relations within the country and within neighboring countries.
· Recognition of the voices of women whose partners are in the army and other security forces.

· A comprehensive plan of care for orphans and all children infected or affected by HIV, including provision of school fees for HIV infected children, who are no less deserving of education than their HIV negative brothers and sisters.

· A school based education plan that brings appropriate curricula about PMTCT and HIV disease to girls and boys, and young men and women, so that they have the information they need to remain alive.

· Effective community sensitization materials on reproductive health and HIV. This information should be made available in all languages, including Braille and sign language, and should be made freely available throughout the rural areas, along with health services for the communities in these villages.

· Along with these services and material, we call for free infant formula to be made available to all who need it for at least the first year of an infant's life.

· We demand job security and training opportunities for all people, including men and women living with HIV and AIDS.

· Confidentiality about HIV diagnoses.

· Continuing research on simpler, cheaper drugs and regimens to help fight HIV and treat opportunistic infections.

· We call on researchers to work in collaboration with traditional healers - to recognize their discoveries and to gain information about traditional remedies, rather than ignoring their contribution to the care of HIV infected people.

· Finally, people with HIV and their allies at the Focus on Women Conference strongly call on all communities and especially policy makers to stop using abusive and derogatory language that belittles the position of people living with HIV. Stigmatization is yet another obstacle to our fight for equal rights and access to treatment - we must all work together to combat it on every level.

Before I conclude today, I want to share with you, on behalf of all the participants of A Focus on Women, that our work is not over. We have only begun organizing around this issue. We have used this conference as the foundation for a long-term campaign for access to HIV treatment, information and support services that will benefit all the men, women and children of Uganda. On Friday, we begin our campaign with a public forum on MTCT that will take place at the Hotel Africana at 2 pm. We hope you will join us. In the weeks and months that come, we will continue our work - and have already begun to plan, with our sisters in Kenya and Tanzania, the formation of an East African Women’s
Treatment Access Campaign. We thank you for your support throughout this meeting and we invite you to join us in this struggle. Working together, we will win. Thank you.