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We must protect the children!

Breast/chestfeeding prohibitions

Alison Symington, HIV Justice Network

Not a Criminal:
Safe Cities and Justice for All People Living with HIV
September 25, 2023
17:45 – 18:45
Emerald Room

Children & HIV in 2022

- 2.58 million children aged 0-19 were living with HIV.
- About 130,000 new HIV infections among children under five.
- Each day, approximately 274 children died from AIDS-related causes.



Reproductive Coercion

- intimate partner violence
- interference with contraception
- exclusion of parents &/or children (eg, school, childcare, housing)
- Misleading/incomplete health information
- abusive obstetric care
- forced sterilization

High Court of Kenya

September 21, 2023



The forced sterilization of four women living with HIV constitutes a violation of their fundamental rights, including dignity, freedom from discrimination, the right to the highest attainable standard of health, and the right to establish a family.

Punitive approaches to breast/chestfeeding

- Preventing HIV transmission has been used to justify **surveillance**, **judgement**, and **limitations on the autonomy** and decision-making of parents living with HIV.
- Caregivers living with HIV have lost their jobs.
- **14 women have faced criminal prosecution** for breastfeeding.
- Parents may **hide** their infant feeding choices to avoid stigma, violence, service interruption, and child welfare intervention.

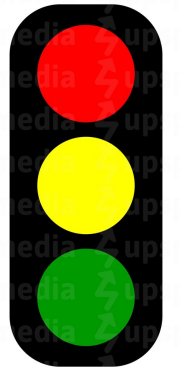


Impacts

- parents living with HIV may not seek expert medical advice and family or community support.
- children may be taken away from loving parents.
- infants may not receive the best nutrition for their situation.
- women living with HIV may face punishment ranging from loss of employment to incarceration.
- spreads misinformation and stigma about HIV.

WHO 2023

- If a mother living with HIV is taking ART and maintains a **suppressed** viral load during pregnancy, delivery and breastfeeding, the risk of vertical HIV transmission can be **as low as <1%**.
- If a mother is taking ART and is **undetectable** prior to and throughout pregnancy and delivery, there is **no risk** of transmitting to the infant during pregnancy.
- a pregnant mother living with HIV whose viral load is **suppressed** within four weeks of delivery is at **low risk** of transmitting HIV to their infant
- **WHO recommends breastfeeding for women taking ART.**



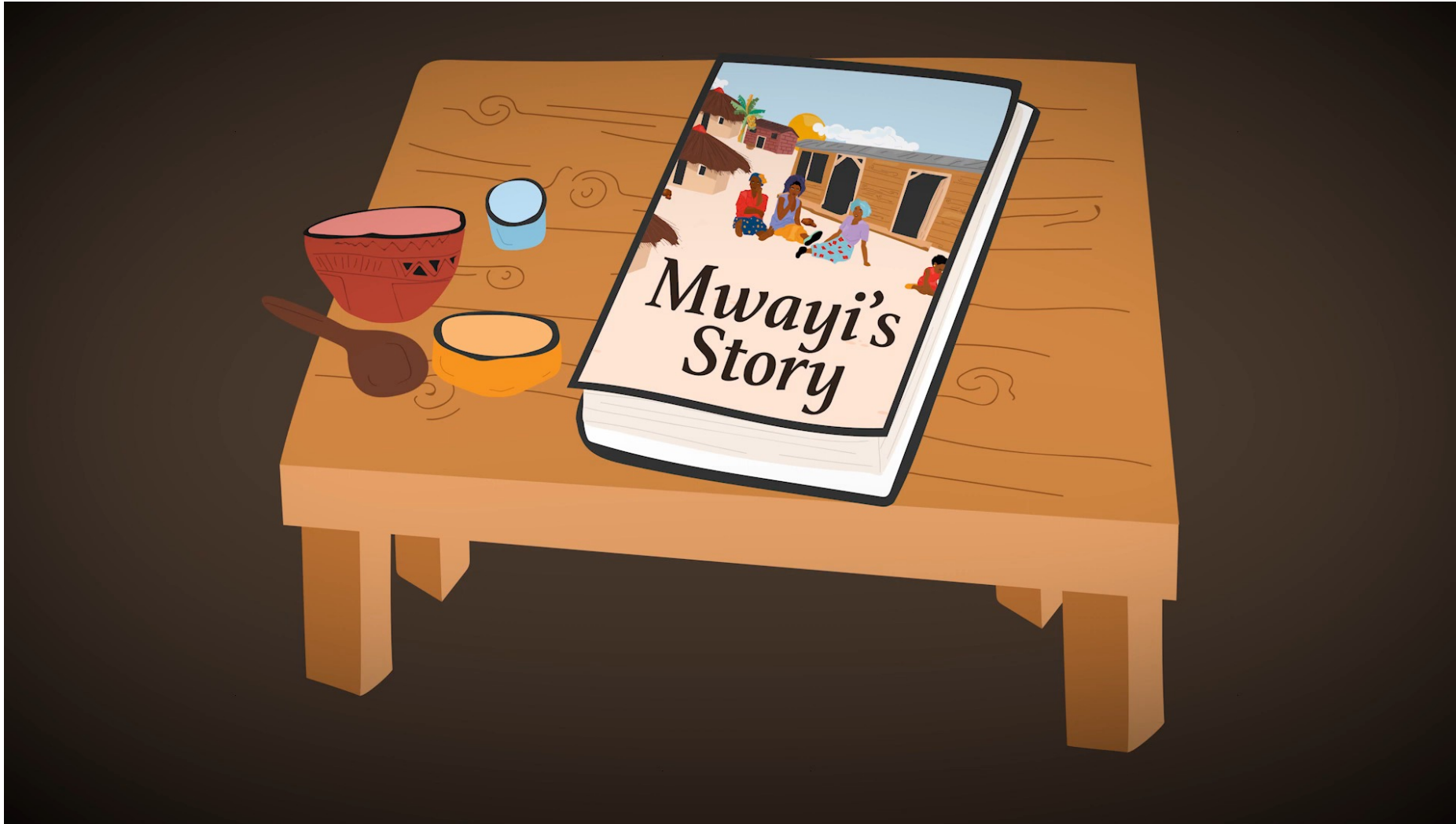
(The Role of HIV Viral Suppression in Improving Individual Health and Reducing Transmission, Policy Brief)

Fast-Track Cities 2023 • September 25-27, 2023

Real safety and justice

- complete and accurate information regarding the risks and benefits of breast/chestfeeding.
- comprehensive healthcare, treatment and social supports.
- no criminal charges for breast/chestfeeding while living with HIV.
- no removal of children from their parents/guardians because of breastfeeding by a person living with HIV.
- supportive public health interventions.
- no one should lose their job working with children because of their HIV-positive status.

HIV JUSTICE
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* Video & Discussion Guide available via www.hivjustice.net.

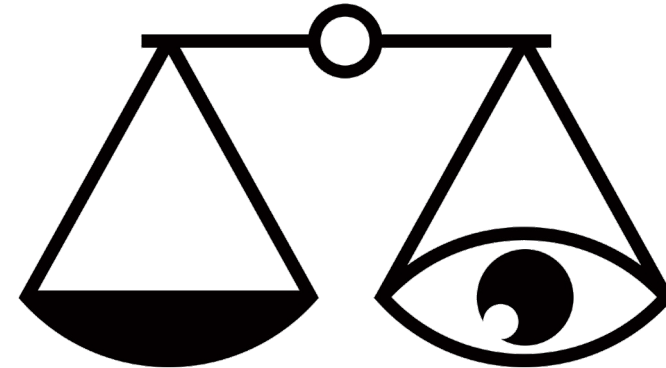
Thank you!

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www.hivjustice.net

**HIV JUSTICE
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HIV JUSTICE WORLDWIDE



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www.hivjusticeworldwide.org