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A UNAIDS Initiative
**The Global Coalition
on Women and AIDS**

“Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise”

The Role of Faith-based Community in Stopping Violence Against Women and Fighting AIDS

The face of AIDS is increasingly young and female, and the statistics are startling. Nearly half of people living with HIV worldwide are women, and 76% of youth living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa are young women and girls. Intersecting with the growing feminization of the global AIDS epidemic is another epidemic – that of violence against women and girls.

Each day, millions of women and girls are subjected to violence by family members, acquaintances, or strangers. This is not only a fundamental violation of their human rights, but also a significant cause and consequence of their infection with HIV. As many studies have shown, women living with HIV are more likely to have experienced violence, and women who have experienced violence are at greater risk for HIV infection.

Why is this so? For one, violence and the threat of violence make it difficult, or often impossible, for women to have the power to abstain from sex, to get their partners to be faithful, or to use a condom. Moreover, violence often is a barrier to women and girls in accessing essential HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support services, furthering this vicious cycle.

A World AIDS Day Luncheon Event:

December 1st, 12:30 – 2:30 p.m.

Capitol Hill

Washington, D.C.

Reversing the dual epidemics of violence against women and HIV is an international imperative. That's why the UNAIDS-led Global Coalition on Women and AIDS (GCWA) has made this a top policy priority, and is engaging key constituencies at global, regional, and national levels who possess the reach, resources, and commitment to make a real difference.

As one such constituency, the faith-based community has a crucial role to play in efforts to stop violence against women and fight AIDS. Worldwide, institutions of faith occupy a unique place in billions of people's lives. As a result, they have an extraordinary capacity to reach individuals and communities with information and access to essential services. Many faith-based institutions have already actively joined this fight but, as is true for us all, so much more can and must be done.

To this end, the GCWA and a diverse group of partners are joining forces on World AIDS Day, December 1, 2006, for an afternoon of dialogue and discussion among prominent religious and civil society leaders, women living with HIV, and government representatives focused around how the faith-based community can continue and expand its leadership role, helping to promote and support effective strategies to stop violence and fight AIDS worldwide.

Among the many organizations joining forces as event cosponsors are GCWA partners International Center for Research on Women and Center for Women's Global Leadership along with American Jewish World Service, The Balm in Gilead, Christian Connections for International Health, Church World Service, Muslim Women's Coalition, Lott Carey International, the National Minority AIDS Council, and the General Board of Church & Society of The United Methodist Church.

Please help us to stop the epidemics of violence against women and girls and HIV. For more information about this issue, event, or how to participate, please contact Pauline Muchina in the UNAIDS-USA Office in Washington, DC at muchinap@unaids.org or (202) 223-7610.