



The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS is an informal grouping of partners and organizations working to mitigate the impact of AIDS on women and girls worldwide. It is a growing global, inclusive movement seeking to support, energize and drive AIDS-related programmes and projects to improve the daily life of women and girls. The Coalition seeks to build global and national advocacy to highlight the effects of HIV and AIDS on women and girls and stimulate concrete, effective action. Efforts are focused on preventing new HIV infections, promoting equal access to treatment, addressing legal inequities and mitigating the impact of AIDS for women and girls.

The Coalition's Five Key Aims

- *To address the increasing global impact of AIDS on women and girls*

The latest epidemiological figures show that AIDS is having an ever-increasing impact on women and girls, highlighting the inadequacy of efforts to date.

- *To help meet a series of ambitious international targets*

The UN Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, adopted by the General Assembly Special Session on AIDS in 2001, provides a series of progressive, measurable targets to tackle HIV and AIDS - many relate directly to women and girls. Most of these targets are set for 2005 and need extra effort and attention if they are to be met.

- *To support the wider global AIDS response*

As a result of the devastating impact of the epidemic on women and girls, progress in many other areas of the response to AIDS relies on what is done for women and girls today. They will be key to driving the response tomorrow.

- *To improve prevention for women and girls*

To be effective, prevention programmes must recognize the realities of many women's lives. Women and girls often have limited access to essential education and health care services and often cannot choose to abstain from sex or insist on condom use. In addition they are often coerced into unprotected sex, and are often infected by husbands in societies where it is common or accepted for men to have more than one partner.

- *To address severe societal and legal inequities which compound the impact of HIV and AIDS on women and girls*

Women and girls are disadvantaged by society in a number of ways that men are not. HIV and AIDS make these inequities worse and life threatening. Women face particular challenges in the areas of access to property rights, through limited access to education, limited access to care and treatment and when violence against women is tolerated.

The Coalition's Approach

The Global Coalition recognizes that the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV infection and the impact of AIDS are linked to underlying gender inequalities and societal norms that need to be challenged. The Coalition is focussed on effecting changes in areas that have a direct and significant impact on the lives of women and girls - through strengthening their capacity and resilience, as well as their position in their families and societies.

The Global Coalition is guided by the following **key principles**:

- Women are not victims and their vulnerability does not stem from inherent physical or psychological weaknesses. The strong resilience of women to persevere in the face of hardship and difficulty is inspiring.
- Women are leaders in many areas of the AIDS response but too often interventions are not adapted to their realities leaving them at greater risk of HIV infection and at a disadvantage when it comes to coping with AIDS.
- Many women who are infected with HIV - or at great risk of becoming infected - do not practise high-risk behaviours. They are vulnerable largely because of the behaviour of others, through their limited autonomy and external factors, including social and economic inequities, beyond their control.
- Factors that make women and girls more vulnerable to HIV infection can be changed - given sufficient commitment, attention and resources.
- Women living with HIV/AIDS have a unique and valuable contribution to make in tackling the spread of HIV and fighting AIDS.
- Men, boys and wider communities are positive forces for change in improving the situation of women and girls. Efforts to foster more equitable and respectful gender relations are essential including the promotion of models of masculinity among young men that support this.

The Coalition's Focus

- **preventing** HIV infection among girls and young women
- **reducing** violence against women
- **protecting** the property and inheritance rights of women and girls
- **ensuring** equal access by women and girls to care and treatment
- **supporting** improved community-based care, with a special focus on women and girls
- **promoting** access to prevention options for women, including female condoms and microbicides
- **supporting** on-going efforts towards universal education for girls

The Coalition's Structure

The coordination of the Coalition is light, dynamic and evolving alongside the needs of its partners. The overall direction and guidance of the Coalition is provided by a high-level Steering Committee which meets once a year and includes 20-25 leaders from a range of different constituencies including UN agencies, civil society, the public sector and academics. Leadership in each of the key areas identified for action is provided by expert partners, who will seek to convene broad partnerships for advocacy and action. Staff support for the Coalition is provided by the UNAIDS Secretariat.

Funding

The Coalition advocates for increased funding at global and national levels to help address the challenges facing women and girls. It also works with implementing partners to assist in resource mobilization for activities in each of the focus areas.