



A UNAIDS Initiative

# The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS

The Global Coalition on Women and Aids brings together a wide range of partners –civil society groups, networks of women living with HIV and AIDS, governments, and UN agencies– who work together to lessen the devastating impact of AIDS on women and girls worldwide.

Almost half of the adults living with HIV and AIDS today are women. Over the past two years, the number of women and girls infected with HIV has increased in every region of the world, with rates rising particularly rapidly in Eastern Europe, Asia, and Latin America. In sub-Saharan Africa, women and girls already make up almost 60% of adults living with HIV.

Launched in early 2004, the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS works at global and national levels to highlight the effects of AIDS on women and girls and to stimulate concrete and effective action to prevent the spread of HIV. Coalition partners seek to address some of the fundamental gender inequalities that fuel the epidemic. Efforts are focused on preventing new HIV infections, promoting equal access to care and treatment, ensuring universal access to education, addressing legal inequities, reducing violence against women, and valuing women's care work within communities.



## Guiding Principles

The six principles that guide the Global Coalition are:

**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 or at risk of becoming infected do not practise high-risk behaviours** but are frequently married or in a monogamous relationship. 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.

**Women living with HIV and AIDS make a unique contribution** to tackling the spread of HIV and fighting AIDS.

**Women are not victims.** Their vulnerability does not stem from inherent physical or psychological weaknesses. Their resilience in the face of hardship and difficulty must be recognized and strengthened.

**Men and boys** and wider communities must be encouraged to fulfil their potential as positive forces for change in improving the situation of women and girls. Efforts to foster more equitable and respectful gender relations are essential.

**Change is possible** – Factors that make women and girls more vulnerable to HIV infection can be changed – if sufficient attention, commitment, and resources are invested.

## 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 of these relate directly to women and girls.

**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 will depend on what is done for women and girls today. This 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.

## Action Areas

The Coalition has highlighted seven key action areas. Seven sets of “convening agencies” work with partners advocating for concrete action in each of these areas:

**Prevent HIV infection among girls and young women:** Of the 35.7 million people between the ages of 15 and 49 living with AIDS, 17 million are women. In some countries, adolescent girls face infection rates that are five to six times higher than those of boys the same age. *Global Coalition partners UNFPA, the International Planned Parenthood Federation and Young Positives are convening a broad group of partners to work together to improve HIV prevention efforts and promote better access to reproductive care for young women and girls.*

**Reduce violence against women:** Violence is a regular feature of too many women’s lives - whether in a domestic context or as a result of armed conflict. Frequently, this is accompanied by sexual violence which can lead to both mental and physical problems, including HIV infection. *WHO, the Centre for Women’s Global Leadership and their partners work to reduce violence against women and raise awareness of the relationship between violence against women and HIV and AIDS.*

**Protect the property and inheritance rights of women and girls:** Globally, women are far less likely to own property than men. They rarely inherit property and land, and are often left alone or dependent on relatives. In some countries, AIDS widows may experience particular discrimination. *The International Centre for Research on Women and FAO work to clarify the link between property and inheritance rights and HIV/AIDS, raise public awareness of the link, and advocate for legal reforms that enhance women’s rights to inherit and own property.*

**Ensure women and girls have equal access to care and treatment:** Worldwide, less than 8 per cent of the people who need antiretroviral treatment receive it. The vast majority of women and girls remain untested, uncounselled, and untreated. *WHO and UNAIDS are leading a campaign to provide treatment to 3 million people living with AIDS in developing countries by the end of 2005. At the same time, WHO and the International Community of Women Living with HIV and AIDS are convening fellow- advocates to ensure equal access to treatment for women and girls.*

**Support improved community-based care, with a special focus on women and girls:** The burden of caring for relatives with AIDS falls overwhelmingly on the family, with women and girls taking on a disproportionate responsibility. *UNIFEM, HelpAge International, and the Young Women’s Christian Association and their partners aim to raise awareness of the magnitude and implications of women’s care work. They advocate for support for care givers at community and household level, and promote greater gender equity in care responsibilities.*

**Promote access to new prevention options for women, including female condoms and microbicides:** Male condoms are effective, but it is difficult for many women (particularly wives) to insist they are used. Women urgently need female-initiated HIV prevention options. *The International Partnership on Microbicides, the Global Campaign on Microbicides and their partners support efforts to develop effective microbicides and encourage wider availability - and use - of the female condom.*

**Support ongoing efforts towards universal education for girls:** There is increasing evidence that girls who stay in school for longer have sex later and are likely to be better informed about HIV prevention. *UNICEF and the Global Campaign for Education are spearheading a collective effort to ensure universal access to education. They also work to ensure that schools provide skills-based education and that girls are safe at school and on the way to and from school.*

## Structure and Funding

The Coalition is supported by a small secretariat located within UNAIDS. Leadership in each of the action areas is provided by convening partners, who are building broad partnerships for advocacy and action (see list below). Meanwhile, a group of prominent individuals from around the world serve on the Coalition's Leadership Council - helping to get the message out to the widest possible audience.

The Coalition advocates for increased funding at global and national levels to help address the challenges facing women and girls as well as helping implementing partners to mobilize resources. The Coalition has begun to support regional initiatives to reduce the impact of HIV and AIDS on women and girls, through a series of advocacy activities in Southern Africa and South Asia. In 2005, these will be further developed, and additional support is envisaged to initiatives in East Africa, the Caribbean, and the Middle East.

## Global Coalition Convening Agencies

Centre for Women's Global Leadership

Global Campaign for Education (GCE)

Global Campaign on Microbicides

HelpAge International

International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW)

International Community of Women Living with HIV and AIDS (ICW)

International Partnership on Microbicides (IPM)

International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)

United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

World Health Organisation (WHO)

Young Positives

Worldwide YWCA

