

Highlights on the World AIDS Campaign 2004 Women, Girls, HIV and AIDS Better education and equal rights to prevention, treatment and care

Why Women?

- Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to HIV infection and to the impact of AIDS.
- Around half of all people living with HIV in the world are female. In recent years, the overall proportion of HIV-positive women has steadily increased. In 1997, women accounted for 41% of the total number of people living with HIV. Today this percentage has increased to 50%.
- Young women and girls aged between 15 and 24 years make up 64% of the young people living with HIV/AIDS in developing countries. This proportion, however, is 75% in sub-Saharan Africa, which is the most affected area in the world.
- Globally, young women and girls are more susceptible to HIV than men and boys, with studies showing they can be 2.5 times more likely to be HIV-infected than their male counterparts.
- Women are also biologically more vulnerable to infection; male-to-female HIV transmission is estimated to be twice as likely as female-to-male.



- AIDS intensifies the feminization of poverty, particularly in hard-hit countries, and disempowers women.
- Entire families are also affected, as vulnerability increases when women's time caring for the sick is taken away from other productive tasks within the household.

The Campaign objective

- The campaign seeks to raise awareness about, and help address, the many issues affecting women and girls around HIV and AIDS.
- The campaign challenges gender differences that make women and girls more vulnerable to HIV.
- The campaign finally aims at increasing the self-esteem of vulnerable and/or already infected women and encouraging them to tell their stories and then seek treatment and care.



Women's rights to a better education

- In high prevalence countries, girls' enrolment in school has decreased in the past decade. Girls are the first to be pulled out of school to care for sick relatives or to look after younger siblings.
- HIV/AIDS is threatening recent positive gains in basic education and disproportionately affecting girls' primary school enrolments.
- Going to school is protective. Education is one of the key defenses against the spread of HIV and the impact of AIDS and the evidence for this is growing.



Women's equal rights to prevention, treatment and care

- Women's vulnerability to infection with HIV/AIDS is primarily due to inadequate knowledge about the disease, their insufficient access to HIV prevention services, and a lack of female-controlled HIV prevention methods, such as microbicides.
- Women make up a large proportion of people living with HIV/AIDS in need of care, treatment and support.
- By 2005, at least half of all people with access to antiretroviral drugs should be women. This means 1.5 million of the 3 million target set by the World Health Organization to be reached by 2005.
- The 2004 Campaign will seek to ensure that the '3 by 5' initiative incorporates robust messages about treatment access for women and girls and ensures that gender equality is respected as a key need when developing programmes for better access to all forms of care and treatment.

Testimonies for World AIDS Campaign 2004



"I cared for my husband until the day he died of AIDS. I was left with two children and not enough money to raise them properly. I had to work hard to make the ends meet. People were very hard on my kids, telling them that their father died because he did something bad, but I always explained to them that their father died of an illness that anyone could get if they don't follow the proper prevention methods. I made sure that the story of their father would be a source of awareness for them rather than a source of shame"

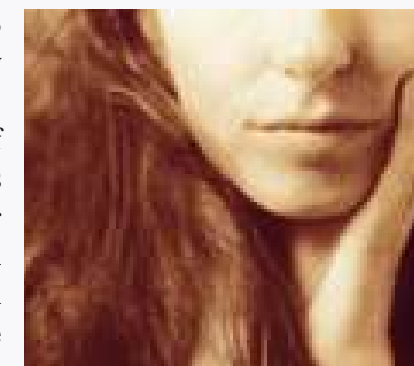
Widow of a person who lived with AIDS, 44 years

"I learned that I have HIV in one of the state hospitals. I had to move to the city so that I could get adequate treatment. At first, I could not find a home for me and my 7 children because landlords, as soon as they knew that I had HIV, refused to give me apartments. My children were ostracized at school and mocked by their schoolmates. In hospitals, most of the doctors refused to touch me. The dentist kicked me out of the clinic".

Female with HIV, 42 years

"My husband died of AIDS after having unknowingly passed the infection to me. His parents accused me of being the one who has brought the infection to their son, that is, of being unfaithful to him. They took my children and forced me to leave the house. I turned to my parents who understood the situation and sheltered me, but my father's ill health did not allow them to support me financially. I looked for work, but none of those who knew me accepted to give me a job because they knew that I've got HIV. Finally, I found a job quite far from my neighborhood where nobody knew me... I have to commute to my workplace everyday and I spend more money on transportation than on supporting myself".

Female with HIV, 42 years



HIV/AIDS statistics

Globally

It is estimated that between 35 and 42 million people are living with HIV/AIDS.

The highest estimates for people living with HIV/AIDS are in:

- Sub-Saharan Africa (around 25 million)
- South and South-East Asia (6.5 million)
- Latin America (around 1.6 million)
- Eastern Europe and Central Asia (around 1.3 million)

Around 4.8 million people were newly infected with HIV/AIDS during 2003.

The highest estimates for new HIV/AIDS infections occurring during 2003 are in:

- Sub-Saharan Africa (around 3 million)
- South and South-East Asia (around 850 000)
- Eastern Europe and Central Asia (around 360 000)
- East Asia and Pacific (around 200 000)

It is estimated that around 3 million people died from HIV/AIDS in 2003.

The highest estimates for deaths due to HIV/AIDS during 2003 are:

- Sub-Saharan Africa (around 2.2 million)
- South and South-East Asia (around 460 000)
- Latin America (around 84 000)
- East Asia and Pacific (around 44 000)



Eastern Mediterranean Region

It is estimated that around 700 000 people are living with HIV/AIDS in the Region. The most affected country is Sudan.

Around 55 000 people were newly infected with HIV/AIDS in the Region in 2003.

Around 45 000 deaths due to HIV/AIDS occurred in the Region in 2003.

Up to the end of 2003, 14 397 AIDS cases had been

reported in the Region, 1076 of which were reported in 2003.

Heterosexual transmission of HIV is the main mode of transmission in the Region, accounting for nearly 65.3% of all reported AIDS cases.

Injecting drug use is playing an increasing role in spreading HIV, and may soon become the driving force behind the HIV epidemic in the Region. A five-fold increase in HIV/AIDS was reported among injecting drug users between 1999 and 2002.



Estimates of HIV in Eastern Mediterranean countries, 2003-2004

