

WHERE DOES UNIFEM STAND ON GENDER EQUALITY AND HIV?

UNIFEM brings gender equality and human rights perspectives to its work on women and HIV and AIDS, spearheading strategies that make clear links to underlying factors such as violence against women, feminized poverty and women's limited voice in decision-making. UNIFEM has contributed to integrating gender aspects into the plans and policies developed by national AIDS councils in more than 35 countries and regional programmes.

With an emphasis on reducing discrimination, UNIFEM highlights the contributions and priorities of women living with or affected by HIV and AIDS. In a number of countries, **HIV-positive women have taken a leading role in advocacy by forming networks that provide a strong platform for their voices to be heard.** UNIFEM provides technical support to enhance the leadership and participation of HIV-positive women in decision-making, and works to **safeguard their rights to services, inheritance and property.**

The key areas of action are:

1. Support women as 'agents of change' (see detailed note)
2. Eliminate barriers to women's access to prevention, treatment and care
3. Eliminate Violence Against Women (VAW)
4. Support women affected by HIV and AIDS who are providing care

WOMEN AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

- In fewer than 10% of the 79 countries surveyed by UNAIDS in 2006 did women participate fully in the development of national AIDS plans.
- Women are also poorly represented on many of the Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs) that develop and submit funding proposals to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria.
- Experience at the country level has shown that HIV/AIDS organizations are not equipped to address the range of issues impacting on women disproportionately, including ending violence against women, or advocating for property and other entitlements for women.
- Although HIV prevalence data is usually disaggregated for men and women aged 15-49, only 21% of countries were able to provide disaggregated data on the UNGASS core indicators in 2003- making it difficult to design effective prevention, treatment, care and support programmes.
- It is critical that all national level data collected in relation to programmes addressing HIV/AIDS are disaggregated by sex and that stakeholders are involved in data collection and analyses at the national level.

There is a need for major investment in women's groups who can and do effectively transform agendas in ensuring women's rights are upheld. It is essential that all programmes, policies and strategies incorporate the experiences and voices of positive women – who are living the reality of HIV and AIDS. **Their activism and leadership is what will lead to transformation needed to combat HIV/AIDS.**