

Facts and Figures:

- *In Sub-Saharan Africa, 55% of all HIV-positive adults are women.*
- *In many high prevalence countries, teenage girls are infected at a rate five or six times greater than their male peers.*

The HIV And AIDS Crisis Has A Disproportionate Impact On Women And Girls.

Women and girls are biologically more susceptible to HIV infection than men: male-to-female transmission is twice as likely as female-to-male. In addition, they are made particularly vulnerable because of inequalities in employment, education, and choices in relationships.

While women and girls may be aware of the factors that put them at risk of HIV infection, they often have very little power to reduce their vulnerability, and must rely on the willingness of their male partners to adopt safe sex practices.

Women's lack of economic power may put them at risk for sexual exploitation and violence or force them into prostitution. The conditions that foster these inequalities are largely a result of the abuse and denial of their fundamental human rights.

Once infected, women face discrimination in health and legal services as well as within their families and communities. They are more likely than men to be blamed, stigmatized, and abandoned.

HIV And AIDS Take A Heavy Toll On Children.

1700 children are infected with HIV every day. At the end of 2005, an estimated 2.3 million children were living with HIV. Almost all of them live in Sub-Saharan Africa.

More than 90% of newly infected children are babies born to HIV-positive women, who have acquired the virus from mother-to-child transmission. Without intervention, an HIV-positive woman has a 35% chance of passing the virus onto her child. Half of all such transmission occurs during delivery; another third occurs in breastfeeding.

HIV-positive children in wealthy nations receive modified antiretroviral medications – for example, syrups or powders that are mixed with water. As a result, these children live longer, healthier lives. These techniques are not suitable for the Global South, where refrigeration to maintain stability of drugs in syrup form is often lacking, as is clean water. Little effort has been made to adapt medicines for pediatric use in the Global South.



KAIROS unites the Anglican Church of Canada, Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Canadian Religious Conference, Christian Reformed Church in North America (Canada Corporation), Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Mennonite Central Committee Canada, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and The United Church of Canada in faithful action for justice and peace.
www.kairoscanada.org or Toll Free at 1-877-403-8933

KAIROS works on HIV and AIDS in conjunction with the Christian Host Committee for the XVI International AIDS Conference, a project of the Canadian Council of Churches: www.ccc-cce.ca



KAIROS FACT SHEET
AIDS #5 April 2006

AIDS: Women & Children Last?

AIDS Completely Changes Family Life.

By 2010, an estimated 25 million children worldwide will have lost one or both parents due to HIV and AIDS, yet currently fewer than 10 per cent of those children receive public support or services.

Children living with sick and dying parents remain extremely vulnerable to poverty and exploitation. They are often forced to drop out of school to work or to care for younger siblings.

With limited access to education, economic opportunities, and proper care and nutrition, these children run a significant risk of becoming infected themselves as they move into young adulthood.

Men Are Part Of The Solution.

In a South African survey, 33% of young women reported that they were afraid to say no to sex. 55% reported having sex when they did not want to because their partner did. When men have greater control in sexual relationships than women do, it means that they make decisions about the transmission of HIV.

Any attempt to control the spread of HIV and AIDS among women and children must include both the empowerment of women and extensive education of men and boys – not just about sexually transmitted diseases, but also about the use of power in relationships.

Let me tell you the story of Mary Nzhosa, aged 14. She now heads her household because her parents died of AIDS. Every day, Mary sees her young sister and brother cry from hunger but there's no money to buy food. When they are sick, they cannot go to the hospital because they cannot pay the user fees that are charged. So Mary has decided to sell her body on the streets as a prostitute. Even though she risks getting HIV/AIDS, she tells me she can make money to feed her family.

Emily Sikaswe,
Women For Change, Zambia

What Can Canada Do?

Address the fundamental gender and age inequalities that fuel the HIV and AIDS pandemic, by:

Increasing efforts to address gender-related HIV vulnerability factors in all international policy and programs

Providing additional development assistance in areas that would reduce women's vulnerability to HIV – such as women's leadership programs, legal reforms, land and property rights, affordable and safe housing, and protection from gender-based violence, trafficking and exploitation.

Ensuring that children have access to the essential medicines and services that will give them longer lives. For more detail, see Factsheet #1 on Debt and #4 on Treatment.

What Can We Do?

✚ Pray that eyes may be opened and hearts moved to compassion and justice.

✚ Learn. Contact your denomination (or its development agency) and KAIROS for educational resources. Download a presentation, fact sheets, a bulletin insert and a Global Justice Report at www.kairoscanada.org or contact our office at 1-877-403-8933 for a copy of these resources on CD.

✚ Act. Three global meetings with AIDS on the agenda are taking place from May to August 2006. Let your voice be heard. Send a letter to Prime Minister Harper calling for policies of global justice to end the AIDS crisis. A sample letter can be found on the KAIROS website.

✚ Teach. The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance has produced a teaching resource on HIV and AIDS that encourages students to write advocacy letters to world leaders on this issue. It is available at <http://www.e-alliance.ch/keepthepromise.jsp>