

Launch of the WHO report
"*Women and health: today's evidence tomorrow's agenda*"
9 November 2009, Geneva, Switzerland

Statement by Michel Sidibé, Executive Director
Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

UNAIDS congratulates the World Health Organization on its latest report "*Women and health: today's evidence tomorrow's agenda*" which provides analysis of the health of women and girls around the world.

While the report covers a multitude of health concerns it importantly highlights that in low- and middle-income countries AIDS is the leading cause of death in women aged 15-44 years.

These statistics show that despite increased global attention, the response to HIV is continuing to fail women and that women and girls urgently need to be equipped with the knowledge and capacity to protect themselves from HIV.

"We know that there is a strong relationship between violence against women and HIV," said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS. "We need to help young people develop the skills for mutual consent in sex and marriage and put an end to violence and sexual coercion. This is key to preventing HIV and to achieving gender equality in all aspects of life."

For a truly effective response AIDS must be taken out of isolation and integrated into broader health and development agendas including sexual and reproductive health, countering violence against women, education, poverty and the respect of human rights.

UNAIDS fully supports this report as an important contribution to women's health and will continue to work with WHO and other partners to improve the global response to HIV, achieve the Millennium Development Goals and make the world a safer and healthier place for girls and women.

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UNAIDS is an innovative joint venture of the United Nations, bringing together the efforts and resources of the UNAIDS Secretariat and ten UN system organizations in the AIDS response. The Secretariat headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland—with staff on the ground in more than 80 countries. The Cosponsors include UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank. Contributing to achieving global commitments to universal access to comprehensive interventions for HIV prevention, treatment, care and support is the number one priority for UNAIDS. Visit the UNAIDS Web site at www.unaids.org