

The Right to Health

The Role of Gender in HIV/AIDS

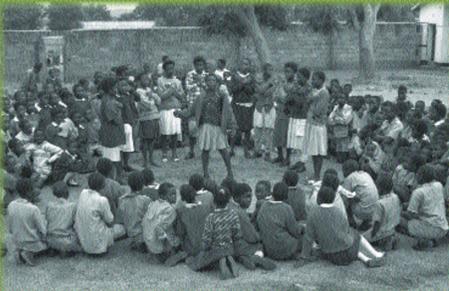


Adolescent girls in a slum in India listen to a woman discuss ways to refuse unwanted sexual advances as part of a local initiative for girls who are not enrolled in school.
UNICEF/HQ00-0111/Alexia Lewnes

Right to Health is:

- the right to the highest attainable standard of health
- a claim to a set of social arrangements – norms, institutions, laws, etc. – that can best secure the enjoyment of this right
- dependent upon other human rights – the right to food, housing, work, education, participation, benefits of scientific progress, life, non-discrimination, equality, access to information, etc.

(World Health Organization)



Adolescent members of the anti-AIDS club at a primary school in Zambia perform for younger students in the school playground. Members of the club write songs and plays on AIDS prevention.
UNICEF/HQ96-1233/Giacomo Pirozzi

Gender Sensitive Policies

All over the world Community Based Organizations and Non-Government Organizations are advocating for gender sensitive policies. Policy makers and governments are adopting gender mainstreaming systems in an effort to address the differing needs of women and men, boys and girls, however little is known about the impact of such policy reform.

- What is required for policy change?
- How does policy translate into practice?
- How is policy monitored and evaluated?
- How can research contribute to policy development, monitoring and evaluation?

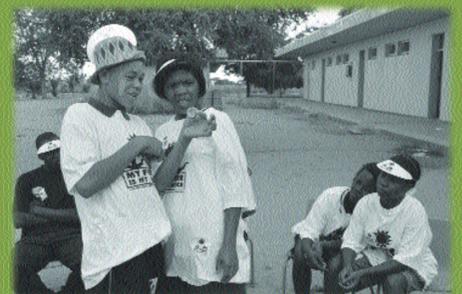
In the context of HIV/AIDS, deliberations about the “right to health” are meaningless without an understanding of and attention to the role of gender. In addition to biological differences that make females more vulnerable than males to HIV infection, existing socio-cultural beliefs and practices further increase women’s vulnerability to infection and the negative impacts/effects of HIV/AIDS.



In Malawi, 65-year-old Maritas Shaba stands with six of the nine grandchildren whose guardian she has become since the death of both their parents from AIDS.
UNICEF/HQ93-2043/Cindy Andrew

Gender and HIV/AIDS

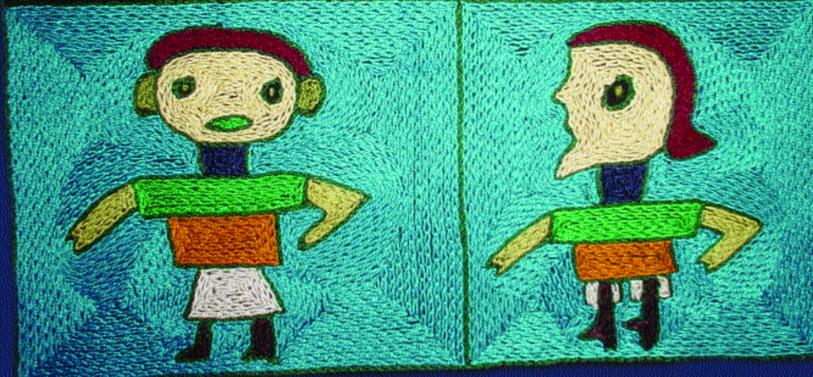
In terms of vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, a person’s right to health is infringed upon by factors often linked to gender, for example: the degree of power, autonomy and control people possess in their public and private lives; level of education; access to information about HIV/AIDS and methods of prevention; exposure to stigma and discrimination; access to care, treatment and support services; economic security; and responsibility of caring for those infected with HIV/AIDS. On all of these fronts, women around the world are more vulnerable than men to infection and adverse impacts of HIV/AIDS.



Two secondary school students take part in a role-play about condoms at a meeting of a youth health development programme in Namibia.
UNICEF/HQ00-0103/Giacomo Pirozzi

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE ON GENDER AND HIV/AIDS (IIGH/A)

DOCTOR I HAVE THE RESULT OF MY HIV TEST I AM HIV POSITIVE THIS IS VERY HARD FOR YOU LIZZIE USE CONDOM TO PROTECT YOURSELF



Since 1999, the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women’s Health and international partners have been working toward the development of an **International Institute on Gender and HIV/AIDS (IIGH/A)**. A number of consultative meetings and workshops have contributed to the design of a transformative, flexible, sustainable environment for mutual learning about gender and HIV/AIDS.

Principles:

Based on principles of social justice, collaboration, commitment, capacity building, accountability, and authentic involvement of persons infected or affected by HIV/AIDS.

Purpose:

To provide a forum for NGOs, CBOs, policy makers and government officials to share best practices with one another to bridge the gap between advocacy, research, policy and practice in addressing the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS.

Outcomes:

- Enhanced network of individuals and organizations working to address the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS
- Greater appreciation of the importance of research (community-based and university-based) to policy development, monitoring and evaluation
- Opportunities for international research collaboration

HIV has been globally recognized as a “gender issue”. In 2003:

- Women account for 60% of all new HIV infections
- An estimated 3000 women contract HIV daily
- About 75% of all HIV infections in developing countries occur through heterosexual intercourse
- In Africa, 67% of people with HIV/AIDS between ages 15 and 24 are female

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