



March 2007

AIDS has a Woman's Face

Gender, Race and AIDS in Africa and the U.S.

"We cannot begin to improve health outcomes for women unless we address the poverty and discrimination that undermine all aspects of their lives."

- Graça Machel, former Minister of Education & Culture of Mozambique



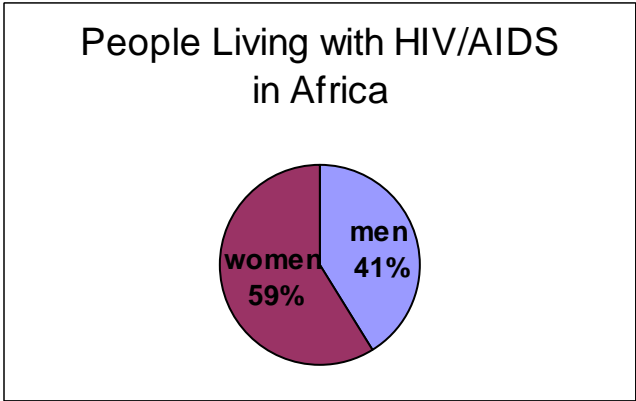
Health worker on the front-line fighting HIV/AIDS.

Gender inequalities are a major driving force behind the global AIDS crisis.

Around the world, AIDS takes its most devastating toll on women and girls. Globally, nearly 7,000 women become infected with HIV every day. Hardest hit of all are Black women and girls in Africa and in the U.S., who are most vulnerable as a result of poverty and discrimination.

HIV/AIDS & Women in Africa

African women and girls are disproportionately affected by the HIV/AIDS crisis. Inadequate access to health care and education leaves women less able to protect themselves from HIV infection. Economic and social inequalities often leave African women marginalized, with limited power over their sexual choices and their own life decisions.



- Almost 14 million of the 18 million women living with HIV/AIDS worldwide live in sub-Saharan Africa.
- HIV infection rates among young African women are often 3 to 5 times higher than among young African men.

HIV/AIDS & Women in the United States

In the United States, HIV infection rates are continuing to increase dramatically among young women of color, particularly African-American women. Here, as in Africa, poverty, racism and gender-related inequalities fuel the spread of HIV/AIDS.

- The rate of HIV infection among African-American women in the U.S. is almost twenty-three times that among white women.
- AIDS is the leading cause of death for African-American women aged between 25 and 34.



AFRICA ACTION
 1634 Eye Street N.W.,
 Suite 810,
 Washington, DC 20006
 T: 202.546.7961
 F: 202.546.1545
 E-mail:
 africaaction@igc.org
 www.africaaction.org





AIDS has a Woman's Face *(continued from the front)*

"Women have particular needs and face specific health issues. However, the health needs of women are given neither the attention nor the prominence they deserve."

- Dr. Margaret Chan, World Health Organization Director General

Take Action! To Defeat AIDS, We Must Stand With Women

If You Don't Who Will?

EDUCATE!
Plan an event with your church, on campus or in your community to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS in Africa.

Africa Action can provide speakers and other educational resources.

ORGANIZE!

Join Africa Action's Campaign to End HIV/AIDS in Africa and take action to change U.S. policies.

Africa Action

T: 202.546.7961

www.africaaction.org

HIV PREVENTION PROGRAMS must be designed by and for women, so they can address women's specific needs and vulnerabilities. In order for women to protect themselves from HIV and other sexually-transmitted diseases, they must have access to prevention methods—such as female condoms and microbicides—that give them control over their own sexual decisions.

HIV/AIDS TREATMENT PROGRAMS must be accessible to women. Drugs that help prevent the transmission of HIV from mothers to their babies must be made available to all HIV-positive pregnant women. Women living with HIV/AIDS must themselves have access to treatments that can improve their health, prolong their lives, and enable them to care for themselves and for their children.

THE GLOBAL FUND TO FIGHT AIDS is directed by representatives of women's organizations as well as other civil society groups, governments and private donors. It provides funding to prevention and treatment programs that are developed with the involvement of affected women themselves. These programs can respond effectively to the needs of people living with HIV/AIDS in the most affected countries, and they can save women's lives. But the Bush Administration refuses to contribute the U.S. fair share to support the Global Fund. As a result, the Fund is chronically underfunded.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES, ESPECIALLY REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE must be available and affordable to women. In many African countries, governments are forced to cut spending on public health in order to repay old, illegitimate debts to the U.S. and other rich country governments. The debt crisis undermines women's health and fuels the spread of HIV/AIDS. Bush Administration policies—known as the **Gag Rule**—that deny funding to reproductive health care services in African countries are detrimental to women's health. Similarly, in the U.S. adequate health care is often not available to women of color in poor communities because of insufficient funding.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN MUST BE ENDED, if we are to win the war on AIDS. Women and girls must be guaranteed access to the full spectrum of human rights, including the right to health. We must take steps to reduce the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV/AIDS if we are to stop the spread of this deadly disease.