

## **HUMAN RIGHTS GOALS & HIV**

### ***Fight Stigma and Discrimination***

Discrimination and inequality drive the AIDS pandemic. Vulnerability to HIV is directly related to one's capacity to access information, to understand risks, to reduce risks, and to access preventive and care services, and is impacted by different levels of income, education, and purchasing power. People with HIV -- or those perceived to be HIV positive -- in turn often risk being fired from their jobs, ostracized by their communities, excluded from the protection of the law, and targeted for violence.

### ***Stop Violence***

Violence can directly elicit HIV transmission, as in the case of rape committed in the context of marriage, community or armed conflict, or harmful practices that expose women and girls to violence, such as female genital mutilation, wife inheritance and early marriage. Violence can lead to risk of transmission, as in social climates that force people to forego testing or treatment because they fear that confidentiality will not be respected and that they will subsequently face further discrimination and physical harm. Violence can be a consequence of being, or perceived as being -- HIV positive, as in the cases of HIV positive prisoners who are placed in solitary confinement or subjected to the use of stun belts, or street people thought to be HIV positive who are targeted by death squads for "social cleansing".

### ***Address Social and Economic Disempowerment***

According to UNAIDS, women are being infected with HIV at increasing rates in all regions of the world. For many women, financial, material or socially-determined dependence on men means that they cannot control when, with whom, and in what circumstances they have sex. Nor can they make demands on partners to minimize risky behavior. Absolute or relative poverty can pressure women to exchange sex for food or goods in order to ensure daily survival for themselves and their children. Measures to protect women's property and inheritance rights, develop poverty reduction strategies, make primary and secondary education for girls a priority, and reform marriage laws are a key component of the fight against AIDS.

### ***Ensure Access to Prevention, Treatment, and Care***

Most people infected with HIV are not aware of their HIV status. The vast majority of the world's young people have no idea how HIV is transmitted or how to protect themselves from the disease, and many misconceptions persist in communities with limited access to accurate information. Prevention of HIV requires a multi-pronged

approach that combines basic education, health education, access to voluntary and confidential counseling and testing, provision of protective measures such as condoms, vigorous efforts to combat stigma and discrimination, and the provision of antiretroviral drugs.

### *Increase International Cooperation*

Some five to six million people in low- and middle-income countries do not have access to necessary life-saving antiretroviral drugs. Greater international cooperation is needed to tackle the global inequities surrounding HIV prevalence and lack of access to treatment. Under international law, all countries are obliged to take steps individually and through international assistance to achieve the full realization of the right to health. To meet this responsibility, the world's wealthiest governments should ensure that contributions to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria match the need; that bilateral aid programs include funding for HIV and AIDS projects; that the debt burden is alleviated for impoverished countries with transparent and accountable plans for addressing poverty and combating AIDS; and that trade agreements relating to pharmaceutical patents are interpreted and enforced in a manner that contributes to the realization of the right to health.

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