

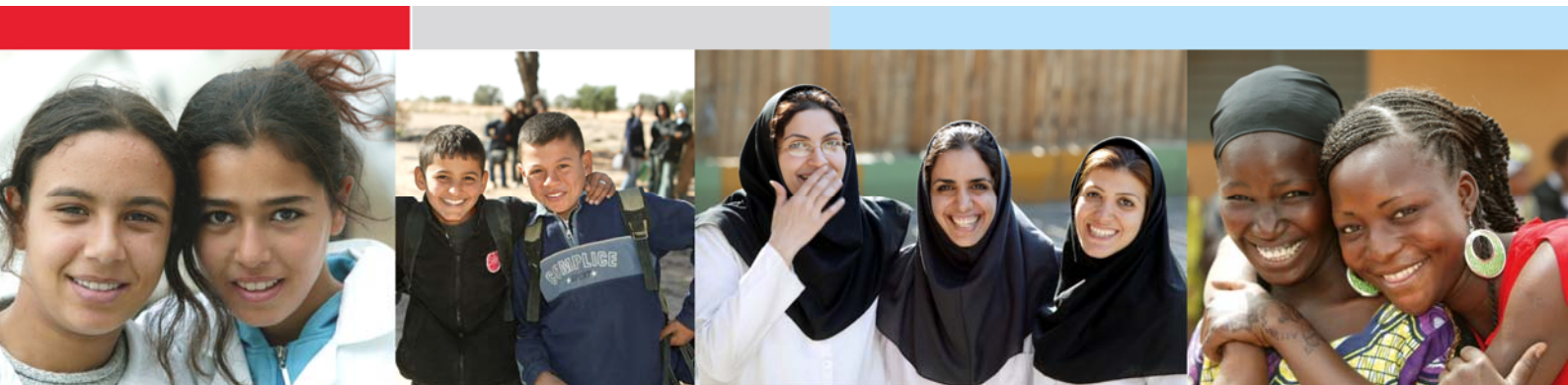


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# Agenda for Accelerated Country Action for Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV

Operational plan for the UNAIDS action framework:  
addressing women, girls, gender equality and HIV



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We would like to make particular note of the outstanding roles played by the working group Chairs: Zonibel Woods of the Ford Foundation, Claudia Ahumada of the World AIDS Campaign, Khadija Moalla of the United Nations Development Programme and Francoise Ndayishimiye of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

The development of the Agenda for Accelerated Action was supported by the secretariat of the Global Task Force, led by Jantine Jacobi, with the strong support of Matthew Cogan and Kreena Govender and the excellent administrative assistance from Lourdes Canale, Angelo Mendoza, Joyce Kuku and Patricia Zanni, of the UNAIDS Secretariat. We equally appreciate the contributions of Kristan Schoultz, Jessie Schutt-Aine, Kent Buse and Lon Rahn of the UNAIDS Secretariat.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Agenda for Accelerated Country Action for Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV 2010–2014 (Operational Plan) supports the implementation of the UNAIDS Action Framework: Addressing Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV<sup>1</sup> The Action Framework was developed in response to the pressing need to address the persistent gender inequalities and human rights violations that put women and girls at a greater risk of, and more vulnerable to, HIV and that threaten the gains that have been made in preventing HIV transmission and in increasing access to antiretroviral therapy. The UNAIDS Action Framework focuses on action in three areas, outlined below, in which UNAIDS<sup>2</sup> and UNIFEM can make specific and unique contributions.

- ▶ Strengthening strategic guidance and support to national partners to ‘know their epidemic and response’ in order to effectively meet the needs of women and girls.
- ▶ Assisting countries to ensure that national HIV and development strategies, operational plans, monitoring and evaluation frameworks and associated budgets address the needs and rights of women and girls in the context of HIV.
- ▶ Advocacy, capacity strengthening and mobilization of resources to deliver a comprehensive set of measures to address the needs and rights of women and girls in the context of HIV.

The Agenda for Accelerated Country Action for Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV: Operational plan for the UNAIDS Action Framework: Addressing Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV (hereafter referred to as the “Agenda for Accelerated Country Action”) was developed through a wide consultative process conducted by the Global Task Force on Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV, led by Professor Sheila Tlou, former Minister of Health of Botswana, and Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS, as requested at the UNAIDS 24th Programme Coordinating Board meeting.<sup>3</sup> The Global Task Force and its three working groups comprised high-level leaders and experts on women, girls, gender equality and HIV from 51 countries and diverse constituencies representing civil society groups, women’s rights organizations and networks of women living with HIV, government, academia and the UN system.

In line with the UNAIDS Action Framework, the Agenda for Accelerated Country Action is rooted in a broad-based human rights approach and reflects a number of principles, including participation, evidence-informed, tailored and ethical responses, partnership, the engagement of boys and men, leadership, multisectorality and accountability. The Agenda for Accelerated Country Action leverages growing political momentum for positive changes to the lives of women and girls. The Agenda for Accelerated Country Action is particularly timely given a range of recent developments that reflect past and present current political commitment to this issue and that respond to the increasing mobilization by women’s groups demanding accountability for these commitments and the need to

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<sup>1</sup> Herein referred to simply as the UNAIDS Action Framework.

<sup>2</sup> In the document, unless stated otherwise, ‘UNAIDS’ refers to the 10 Cosponsor organizations and the Secretariat.

ensure coherence.

The Agenda for Accelerated Action focuses on country-level action, capitalizing on the role of the UN joint teams on AIDS and fostering country leadership. The operational plan supports UN Reform for a more coherent and effective UN response, including within the Delivering as One pilot countries.<sup>4</sup>

The Agenda for Accelerated Action addresses the rights and needs of women and girls and highlights opportunities to work with networks of women living with HIV and diverse women's groups, while engaging men and boys, in particular those working for gender equality. UNAIDS will seek to collaborate with global partners interested in moving forward the agenda on women, girls and gender equality in the context of HIV, and in particular will work with the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (the Global Fund) to leverage resources and seek enhanced efficiencies in resource use.

Although every country is urged to identify actions relevant to its context, there are some common strategies that can achieve results on the universal access targets and the Millennium Development Goals. These may include empowering the leadership of women and girls, especially women and girls living with HIV, access to integrated HIV and sexual and reproductive health services, addressing violence against women and girls and addressing the needs of marginalized women and girls. It is envisaged that countries facing different epidemics will be equally engaged, so that lessons can be learned from a variety of contexts.

The Agenda for Accelerated Country Action is structured around three issues, in line with the UNAIDS Action Framework, that were identified by the Global Task Force as critical to overcoming obstacles to achieving major breakthroughs on women, girls, gender equality and HIV. As outlined below, each issue is accompanied by a recommendation, a set of results and corresponding actions, as well as the parties to be held accountable for delivering results—including the UNAIDS family, individual Cosponsors, the Secretariat, the UN joint teams on AIDS, UNIFEM and other partners, and envisions a role for the to-be-established UN agency for women. The 26 concrete and feasible actions aim to be catalytic in nature, generating synergies between AIDS responses, and to work on the human rights of women and girls and on gender equality and to tap into the richness, expertise and diversity of the women's movement. The Agenda for Accelerated Country Action targets strategic opportunities, such as the review of the UN development assistance framework or the development of a new national strategic plan for HIV, to facilitate its implementation.

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<sup>3</sup> The 24th UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board decision 12.4:  
[http://data.unaids.org/pub/InformationNote/2009/20090603\\_pcb\\_24\\_decisions\\_en.pdf](http://data.unaids.org/pub/InformationNote/2009/20090603_pcb_24_decisions_en.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Albania, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay and Viet Nam.

**Issue: knowing, understanding and responding to the particular and various effects of the HIV epidemic on women and girls.**

- ▶ Recommendation: jointly generate better evidence and increased understanding of the specific needs of women and girls in the context of HIV and ensure prioritized and tailored national AIDS responses that protect and promote the rights of women and girls (knowing your epidemic and response).

**Results:**

- Quantitative and qualitative evidence on the specific needs, risks of and impacts on women and girls in the context of HIV exists through a process of comprehensive and participatory data collection, including on male and female differentials in the epidemic, and better inform the implementation of effective policies and programmes that promote and protect the rights and meet the needs of women and girls.
- Harmonized gender equality indicators are used to better capture the sociocultural, economic and epidemiological factors contributing to women's and girls' risk of and vulnerability to HIV.
- Evidence-informed policies, programmes and resource allocations that respond to the needs of women and girls are in place at the country level.

**Issue: translating political commitments into scaled-up action to address the rights and needs of women and girls in the context of HIV.**

- ▶ Recommendation: reinforce the translation of political commitments into scaled-up action and resources for policies and programmes that address the rights and needs of women and girls in the context of HIV, with the support of all relevant partners, at the global, national and community levels.

**Results:**

- Stronger accountability from governments to move from commitments to women's rights and gender equality to results, for more effective AIDS responses.
- All forms of violence against women and girls are recognized as violations of human rights and are addressed in the context of HIV.
- Women and girls have universal access to integrated multisectoral services for HIV, tuberculosis and sexual and reproductive health and harm reduction, including services addressing violence against women.
- Strengthened HIV prevention efforts for women and girls through the protection and promotion of human rights and increased gender equality.

**Issue: an enabling environment for the fulfilment of women's and girls' human rights and their empowerment, in the context of HIV.**

- ▶ Recommendation: champion leadership for an enabling environment that promotes and protects women's and girls' human rights and their empowerment, in the context of HIV, through increased advocacy and capacity and adequate resources.

**Results:**

- Women and girls empowered to drive transformation of social norms and power dynamics, with the engagement of men and boys working for gender equality, in the context of HIV.
- Strong, bold and diverse leadership for women, girls and gender equality for strengthened HIV responses.
- Increased financial resources for women, girls and gender equality in the context of HIV.
- Gender-responsive UNAIDS.

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## CONTEXT AND ISSUES

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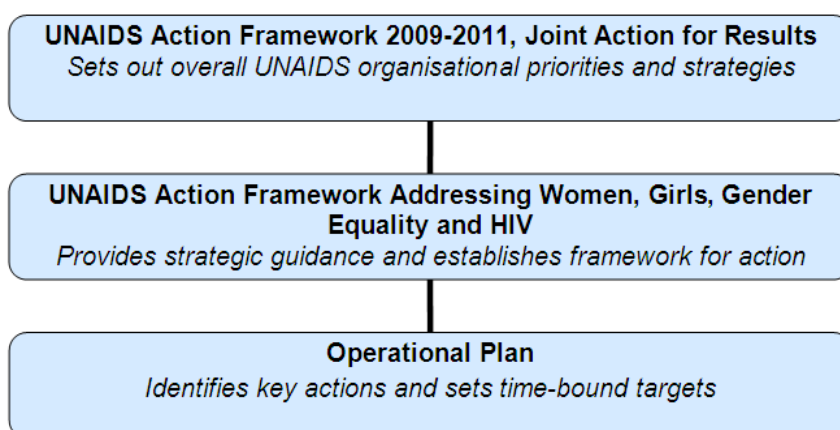
Nearly 30 years into the HIV epidemic, persistent gender inequality and human rights violations that put women and girls at a greater risk of and vulnerability to HIV continue to hamper progress and threaten the gains that have been made in preventing HIV transmission and in increasing access to antiretroviral therapy. In addition to women and girls' biological susceptibility to HIV, women and girls face many interacting sociocultural, economic and legal challenges that worsen their vulnerability to HIV. Young women and girls are often particularly vulnerable to HIV and at risk of human rights violations. Widespread discrimination, injustice and brutality against women and girls manifest themselves in women and girls being excluded from decision-making, epidemic levels of violence against women and girls and impunity for crimes committed against women and girls. The HIV epidemic exacerbates these wrongs, rendering women and girls yet more vulnerable to violations of their human rights and harming society as a whole.

In the broader context, the effects of the epidemic on women and girls intersect with pressing global challenges such as climate change, food insecurity, economic instability and conflict. Socioeconomic issues interact in complex ways with the HIV epidemic. For example, infrastructural investments are observed to result in an influx of male labour and migration of women seeking livelihood opportunities, increasing the risk of HIV transmission, particular in situations where there is limited access to health services for migrant workers. Urbanization, poor city planning and design, informal settlements and lack of access to housing influence the degree of insecurity of women and girls and create conditions that place them at a greater risk of HIV and that limit their access to public services. In addition, forced migration and displacement place women and girls at risk of being deprived of much needed HIV and reproductive health services and are likely to interrupt their access to treatment. The AIDS response needs to anticipate and address women's and girls' complex vulnerabilities to HIV through multisectoral approaches to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Countries have made several global and regional commitments to address the needs and rights of women and girls as part of effective HIV responses within the broader context of the Charter of the United Nations (1945) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). International agreements addressing issues related to women, gender equality, health and human rights include the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (World Conference on Human Rights, 1993), the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (1994) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), as well as international human rights instruments and regional covenants and conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979) and its 1999 Optional Protocol and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2005). Additionally, countries have committed to scale up responses to AIDS and women through the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS (2001) and the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS (2006), the UN Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (2000). Recognizing the need for increased resource allocation and capacity-building, these commitments provide a sound basis for a strengthened multisectoral response for women, girls and gender equality by creating enabling environments for upholding women's human rights and addressing the needs of women living with HIV, as well as providing a strong focus on comprehensive prevention approaches to HIV, sexual and reproductive health and violence against women.

Despite these significant commitments to promote and protect the human rights of women and girls, the HIV epidemic continues to reveal a gap between rhetoric and reality. The AIDS response can serve as a catalyst and bring about sociocultural, political and legal transformations to promote, protect and fulfil the rights of women and girls. By weaving human rights and gender equality into the global AIDS response, we can ensure that women and girls not only have the knowledge and power to protect themselves but also to take their rightful, equal place as advocates, leaders and policy-makers who drive change.

The AIDS response needs to anticipate and address the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV within the broader global and social context to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. To this end, UNAIDS has committed itself, through its Outcome Framework 2009–2011, “to making the response to AIDS an entry point to contribute to efforts to reduce intimate partner and sexual violence and developing comprehensive responses to gender-based violence and HIV prevention within and beyond the health sector”.<sup>5</sup>



The Agenda for Accelerated Country Action utilizes a growing political momentum for positive changes to the lives of women and girls, as demonstrated by the recent decision to establish a new UN agency for women.<sup>6</sup> The UN Secretary-General’s UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign and the multipartner Clinton Global Initiative to address sexual violence against girls present powerful opportunities to make a difference to the lives of women and girls. Furthermore, the UNAIDS Outcome Framework commits to guide future investments in the AIDS response by the

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