

# HIV/AIDS Update

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## Women and AIDS

In 1997, women accounted for 41 per cent of people living with HIV, but recent figures released by UNAIDS show that by 2007 this figure has now risen to 50 per cent worldwide.

by Kevin Osborne

**The number of women and girls living with HIV is on the increase.** This is because current HIV strategies do not, on the whole, tackle the social, cultural, and economic factors that put women at risk of HIV. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the most affected region in the global AIDS epidemic, 61 per cent of those living with HIV are women.

As one of the key conveners of the Global Coalition of Women and AIDS (GCWA), IPPF is seeking to facilitate action that places the needs and wishes of young women and girls at the centre. To specifically reach young people, especially those living with HIV, it is important to have innovative approaches that link into youth culture. For this reason an exciting new collaboration has been formed between Hopes Voice

International and IPPF, UNFPA, Young Positives, and GNP+, which harnesses the popularity of social networking spaces on the internet with YouTube-style videos from HIV positive young women and girls (see page 2).

Under the auspices of the GCWA, IPPF has been looking at current HIV prevention strategies and services for girls and young women in 20 countries through report cards on HIV prevention. While these advocacy reports show the global nature of the HIV epidemic, they also highlight the fact that the approach to HIV prevention strategies and services for young women and girls needs to be country specific – a ‘one size fits all’ approach is not suitable. Simply building up the evidence and making recommendations for change is not enough; to ensure change happens there is a need for



follow-up work that transforms recommendations into reality (see page 3).

We need to ensure that through our services and advocacy work all women and girls – regardless of their background and circumstances, whether they are sex workers or injecting drugs users; married or single; positive or negative –

are all given the opportunity to realize their rights and achieve their dreams and desires.

Love Kevin,  
Kevin Osborne,  
Senior HIV/AIDS Adviser

# Does HIV Look Like Me?

by Todd Murray,  
Executive Director Hope's Voice

We live in an age where social networking internet sites allow friendships to be made between people across the world. These sites are incredibly popular amongst younger people, and innovative ways need to be found to utilize them to break down the stigma attached to HIV, and to provide a place for people living with HIV to share their experiences.

The *Does HIV Look Like Me?* campaign run by Hope's Voice International is one such innovative approach, featuring YouTube-style videos of young adults living with HIV in the USA and UK. The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS (GCWA) – a collaboration made up of UNFPA, IPPF, GNP+ and Young Positives – is entering into an exciting new partnership with Hope's Voice International to expand this campaign worldwide. Currently there are plans to add six more countries: Cambodia, Cameroon, India, Mexico, South Africa, and Swaziland.

Every 14 seconds another young person is infected with HIV. It is time for a campaign that serves as a platform for these young people to share their faces, voices and stories with the world. When young people define their status, they in turn redefine their life. *Does HIV Look Like Me?* allows the visitor to see the similarities and differences of those living around the world with HIV. The campaign website will provide a social networking space for young people living with HIV to interact with others around the world, and create a global community. To facilitate this, each contributor will be given



an email address that enables visitors to the website to contact them directly with questions and comments.

The *Does HIV Look Like Me?* campaign gives young adults living with HIV the opportunity to tell their story in their own words. The videos, available for free on the website [www.doeshivlooklikeme.org](http://www.doeshivlooklikeme.org), aim to educate the general public and show young people that they are not alone. By showing today's realities of living with HIV, it will assist young people, particularly young women and girls, living with HIV to change negative attitudes towards HIV in their community and their country. The peer-to-peer approach will also help to end stigma and fear surrounding HIV and AIDS, with the videos showing that HIV does not discriminate.

As we pass 25 years of this epidemic, we recognize that it's time for an approach that features young people living with HIV or AIDS and creates open dialogue. The older fear-based campaigns that once dominated society have in turn caused society to fear those living with HIV or AIDS. *Does HIV Look Like Me?* is proud to not use this approach, and instead shows today's realities of living with HIV in order to help end stigma.

## The People at IPPF

### Tiia Pertel

#### Youth Sexual Health Counselling Programme Manager, Estonian Sexual Health Association

I have been working for the Estonian Sexual Health Association since the beginning of 2005 where I am responsible for the youth sexual health counselling programme.



By background I am a medical doctor, and have been working in HIV and sexual and reproductive health issues in Estonia for many years and at many different levels.

At the governmental level I have worked as HIV coordinator for the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs. At the local level I have been a team member of the PMTCT project in East-Viru County which has the highest prevalence of HIV in Estonia. At the educational level I have been working with the BalticHealthTrain project at the University of Tartu.

The areas of HIV that I'm particularly interested in are voluntary counselling and testing, PMTCT, stigma and discrimination, and capacity building.

I wake up every morning and go to work very happily because I like my work. I am lucky – a lot of people in the world unfortunately cannot do the things that they would like to for a living.

## World AIDS Day

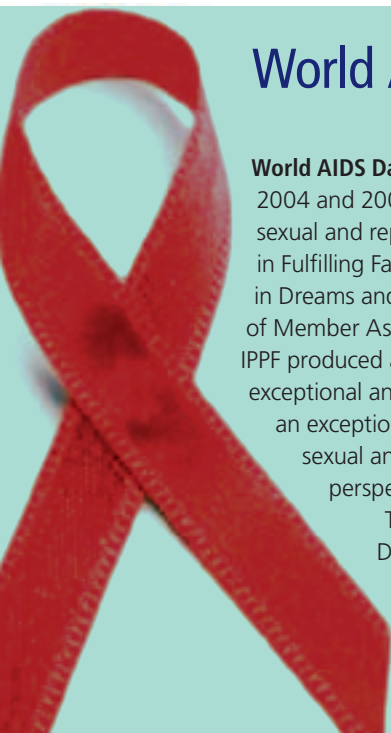
**World AIDS Day is held annually on 1 December.** In 2004 and 2005 IPPF used this day to highlight the sexual and reproductive health needs of fathers in Fulfilling Fatherhood, and those of women in Dreams and Desires. Last year, with the input of Member Associations across the Federation, IPPF produced a poster focusing on why HIV is an exceptional and complex epidemic which requires an exceptional response, particularly from a sexual and reproductive health and rights perspective.

This year, to mark the 20th World AIDS Day, IPPF has created a photographic exhibition focusing on the lives of 12 girls and young women (aged 15-24 years) around the world who are

living with, or affected by, HIV and AIDS. This builds on our past World AIDS Day activities by combining the exceptionality of HIV with the specific sexual and reproductive health needs of those living with HIV.

This year's exhibition explores the unique health needs of young women and girls, and examines their role as key agents of change in preventing HIV, and their ability to act as role models in addressing HIV related stigma and discrimination. It also points to the underlying gender inequalities driving infection rates, and the importance of working with men and boys as partners in HIV prevention.

The worldwide theme for World AIDS Day 2007 is 'leadership', and young women and girls need to be enabled to lead this change. For World AIDS Day the picture exhibition was displayed at the Department for International Development in London (see photograph on page 4). It will be available online from December 2007 and will be displayed at the International AIDS Conference in Mexico in 2008.



## HIV prevention for young women and girls

# Transforming recommendations into reality:

*"Services are scaled up but there is no strategy to encourage girls and young women to use them. And health providers and community workers lack the capacity to provide better information that is more girl-friendly"*

*Director, sexual and reproductive health organization, Cambodia*

**Worldwide, young women and girls are disproportionately affected by HIV.** In Sub-Saharan Africa nearly three-quarters of all people aged 15–24 living with HIV are female. The primary reasons for this are gender inequality and the low status of women and girls, resulting in less access to education, HIV information, and an inability to have equality in marriage and sexual relations. Whilst in general these factors are true in many countries around the world, a 'one size fits all' solution does not exist as the specific problems vary from country to country. New and innovative approaches need to be developed in response to this exceptional epidemic.

A recent, innovative IPPF approach aims to discover the country-specific HIV and sexual and reproductive health needs of girls and young women, and thus begin to address the problems behind the high HIV prevalence in this group. IPPF in collaboration with UNFPA, UNAIDS, and Young Positives, under the auspices of the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, has produced 20 country-specific report cards on HIV prevention for girls and young women. The report cards are evidence-informed advocacy tools which aim to increase and improve the programmatic, policy and funding actions taken on HIV prevention for girls and young women in each of these countries.

The report cards are proving extremely useful because they address the problem in the following ways:

### Building up evidence

The report cards outline the current HIV prevention strategies and services for girls and young women in the target country. This research is focused around five key components that influence HIV prevention, namely: legal provision, policy provision, availability of services, accessibility of services, and participation and rights. The information is gathered through a variety of means including:

- desk research on published data and reports
- in-country focus groups with young women and girls living with HIV, as well as young men living with HIV
- stakeholder interviews with the government and NGOs, UN agencies and service providers working in the country

In this way both those involved with and those affected by HIV prevention strategies are being listened to. Some, such as many of the young women and girls, are being heard for the very first time.

### Making recommendations

Once the research has been collated and analysed, recommendations are made for key stakeholders to enhance action on HIV services for girls and young women in the country. These recommendations and the research findings are then published in a country report card which is widely distributed to key stakeholders. Sometimes this process alone is enough to highlight programmatic failures for service providers.

For example, in Swaziland, the research process directed UNFPA's attention to an insufficient focus on HIV prevention, and this gap in programming is now being filled. However, an 'ad hoc' approach to action is insufficient, and time, effort and money need to be put into transforming the recommendations into reality.

### Transforming recommendations into reality

Follow-up work is carried out by Member Associations and UNFPA to implement the recommendations. One form of follow up has included building consensus for acting on the key report card recommendations via a Youth Symposium and a National Stakeholders' Meeting. At these meetings a realistic plan of action is developed. Seeking high-level political commitment and action from all the key stakeholders, as

well as giving a voice to girls and young women living with HIV, is the first step towards effectively implementing the recommendations. There are already promising signs of progress. For example, in Malawi, young women and girls are now recognized as a vulnerable group in policy on Youth and AIDS and there has been national media attention about the report cards. These initial promising results have highlighted a number of remaining

lessons to be learned and challenges to be addressed, including:

- Ensuring that the report card findings and recommendations reach all the relevant communities, particularly the most vulnerable
- Building and supporting existing national-level mechanisms to bring stakeholders together and increase local ownership
- Reducing the economic vulnerability of young women and girls
- Reaching men and boys as they are key allies in HIV prevention
- Enhancing the leadership of young women and girls, particularly those living with HIV, within national AIDS decision-making processes. They can be included by facilitating access to training on relevant issues.

Overall, the report cards are a huge step towards improving HIV prevention for young women and girls, as instead of being marginalized and forgotten they have been given a voice to tell the world about their specific problems. These report cards are still only the first step, however. Further commitment to leadership and support is required from governments, NGOs, international agencies and service providers, in order to uphold existing promises of action and to break down the stigma and discrimination faced by those living with HIV, especially young women and girls.

**The report cards can be found at <http://www.ippf.org/en/Resources/Guides-toolkits/HIV+Prevention+Report+Cards.htm>**



- 1 'Keeping the Promise: An agenda for action on women and AIDS' by Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, 2006, p8
- 2 The currently completed report cards are: Cambodia, Cameroon, China, Ethiopia, India, Jamaica, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Philippines, Thailand and Uganda. Dominican Republic, Kenya, Serbia, Sudan, Swaziland, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Nepal will be completed shortly.
- 3 These activities have already begun in the Philippines, Malawi and Mozambique. In 2008 further follow-up work will take place in China, Jamaica and Cameroon.

# News in brief

# Events

## New publications

### 2007 AIDS epidemic update

The 2007 AIDS epidemic update reports on the latest developments in the global AIDS epidemic. The 2007 edition provides the most recent estimates of the AIDS epidemic and explores new findings and trends in the epidemic's evolution. It is available at:

[http://www.unaids.org/en/HIV\\_data/2007EpiUpdate/default.asp](http://www.unaids.org/en/HIV_data/2007EpiUpdate/default.asp)

### Legal aspects of HIV/AIDS – A guide for policy and law reform

This new guide from the Global HIV/AIDS Programme looks at the 65 different areas where laws and regulations can either underpin or undermine good public health programmes and responsible personal behaviours. It argues that in order to create a supportive legal framework it is important that governments identify and address effectively any gaps or other problematic aspects of their legislation and regulatory systems. The guide is available online at:

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTHIVAIDS/Resources/375798-1103037153392/LegalAspectsOfHIVAIDS.pdf>

### How to deliver good adherence support: lessons from round the world

The 92nd edition of 'HIV & AIDS Treatment in Practice' looks at recent experiences in the field of adherence support, looking at a variety of practices and programmes across the world. It is available at:

<http://www.aidsmap.com/cms1250002.asp>

If you have any news that you would like to include in this section please contact us.

## Internet resources

### Global Coalition on Women and AIDS

<http://womenandaids.unaids.org>

The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, of which IPPF is a key member, was set up in 2004 to respond to the increasing feminization of the HIV epidemic and a growing concern that existing AIDS strategies did not adequately address women's needs. The website contains information about the coalition and their work, as well as a wide range of tools and resources.

### Center for HIV Law and Policy (CHLP)

<http://www.hivlawandpolicy.org/resources>

The Center for HIV Law and Policy (CHLP) is continuing to build its 'Resource Bank' of pleadings, briefs, policy recommendations, sample legislation, analyses of medical and scientific research, and other types of materials on dozens of issue areas. It is set up much like a virtual filing cabinet for you to reach in and pull out what you need when you need it.

### 23-24 January 2008

Conference: Working hand in hand to address HIV in the workplace  
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

### 24-27 February 2008

Microbicides 2008:  
Striving towards HIV prevention  
New Delhi, India

### 29 July – 1 August 2008

Competencies Workshop for IPPF  
HIV focus countries and regional offices  
Mexico City, Mexico

### 31 July – 1 August 2008

Living Openly: PLHIV  
Mexico City, Mexico

### 3-8 August 2008

International AIDS Conference  
Mexico City, Mexico

### 3-7 December 2008

15<sup>th</sup> International Conference  
on AIDS and STIs in Africa  
Dakar, Senegal



The World AIDS Day photographic exhibition on display at the Department of International Development in London

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