

## PRESS STATEMENT

### Women and girls are critical agents of change in the AIDS response

**GENEVA, 8 March 2012**—On this International Women's day the world has a lot more to do if it is to be a place where:

- Women and men, girls and boys are treated as equal
- Girls shape their own future
- Boys challenge social norms that block opportunities
- HIV does not take away people's dignity and rights.

The reality is very different:

- Every minute, a young woman is newly infected by HIV
- At the same time, girls lack equal access to education
- Far too many women lack control over their finances and assets
- And too many women continue to lack control over their bodies and lives.

It is clear, governments and communities are failing women and girls. There are few sustainable solutions that enable women and girls to protect themselves from HIV, violence and poverty. This is grossly unacceptable, particularly because the world can do much better.

Empowered women and girls are critical agents of change in reversing the epidemic. If society invests in the health of women and girls, it is possible for them to have the future they want.

This is why UNAIDS prioritizes gender equality and why UNAIDS is calling for zero tolerance for violence. Together, we will reach the future we want: zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths among women and girls.

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#### UNAIDS

UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, is an innovative United Nations partnership that leads and inspires the world in achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. Learn more at [unaids.org](http://unaids.org).

UNAIDS' vision: [Zero new HIV infections. Zero discrimination. Zero AIDS-related deaths.](#)