

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN—2018 MESSAGE

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN—2018 MESSAGE

25 November 2018

Michel Sidibé

Executive Director of UNAIDS

Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations

As we mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, we commemorate and renew our global commitment to ending violence against women and other forms of gender-based violence.

Violence against women remains one of the most persistent violations of human rights across the globe, undermining the health, dignity, security and autonomy of women and girls. Women who have been physically or sexually abused by their partners report higher rates of mental health issues, including depression and anxiety, higher use of alcohol and less control over sexual decision-making.

There is an undeniable link between violence against women and HIV. Studies show clearly that women living with HIV are more likely to have experienced violence, and women who have experienced violence are more likely to be living with HIV. In some regions, women who experience physical or sexual intimate partner violence are 1.5 times more likely to acquire HIV than women who have not experienced violence. Among marginalized populations, a high prevalence of violence is linked to higher rates of HIV infection, in particular among transgender women.

Violence or the fear of violence can make it very difficult for women to insist on safer sex and to use and benefit from HIV and sexual and reproductive health services. The fear of intimate partner violence is also an important barrier to the uptake of HIV testing and counselling, to the disclosure of HIV-positive status and to treatment uptake and adherence, including among pregnant women living with HIV. Violence against women living with HIV also manifests in health-care settings—women have even reported being sterilized against their will.

Programmes that empower women and girls through integrated approaches that transform social and cultural norms and promote and implement laws and policies on violence against women, gender equality and HIV are incredibly effective. The uptake of such programmes, combined with political will to promote gender equality and end discrimination against women,

are critical to addressing violence against women. UNAIDS remains committed to continuing to act urgently against violence against women as a human rights imperative and as a cause and consequence of HIV.

On 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women kicks off the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, ending on 10 December, Human Rights Day. It is a time to commemorate and renew our commitment to ending violence against women and other forms of gender-based violence.

[END]

Contact

UNAIDS Geneva | Sophie Barton-Knott | tel. +41 22 791 1697 | bartonknotts@unaids.org

UNAIDS

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. UNAIDS unites the efforts of 11 UN organizations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank—and works closely with global and national partners towards ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. Learn more at unaids.org and connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.