



## **Statement on World AIDS Day 2007**

Today is a fitting time to acknowledge and celebrate the leadership of thousands of women and girls all over the world who, on a daily basis, take on the challenges of the AIDS epidemic with courage and conviction.

On this World AIDS Day, the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS remembers the women whose lives have been touched by the epidemic -- women living with HIV, women who have lost their spouses, children, family members and friends to AIDS, caregivers both young and old, women and girls who find themselves distant from the halls of power, but who nonetheless are powerful leaders in their own families and communities.

Despite overwhelming challenges, these women demonstrate remarkable and unfailing strength and creativity. All over the world, they lead their communities to reduce stigma and discrimination, to increase access to HIV prevention and treatment, to challenge social practices and stereotypes that put them at risk. And far too often they do all this with little recognition.

The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS and all its partners stand in solidarity with these women -- the frontliners in stopping AIDS. It is for them that the Coalition will continue to bring attention to and spur action on those realities of the lives of women and girls which put them at risk and make them vulnerable to HIV infection.

Stigma and discrimination and the threat of violence persist in preventing women and girls from accessing prevention and treatment, even where services are available. Formal legislation and traditional practices far too often work against women's rights to have and inherit property, which presents a serious threat to their economic security. Until and unless the male and female condom and effective microbicides become successfully integrated into a comprehensive and widely available prevention package, women's capacity to protect themselves against HIV infection will continue to be compromised. And there is no doubt that the profound changes we need to make in order to counter the effects of harmful gender norms and traditions will require strong and effective partnerships with men.

The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS will engage vigorously with social and political leadership to deliver on our collective promise. We will work together to increase the financing of initiatives that work for women, to promote public policy and legislation that work for them, and to bring women to decision-making tables.

Let us all stand behind the women who take the lead in confronting AIDS.