

PRESS STATEMENT

Ending violence against women is critical to ending AIDS

Message from UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé on International Women's Day

GENEVA, 8 March 2013—On this day when we honour women, let me speak directly to the men. As husbands and partners, brothers and sons, we must be part of the solution to build a world where women and men are equal.

An equal world is one where all women and men have access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. It is one where women and men can equally protect themselves from HIV. And it is a world where women and girls are free to reach their full potential—without fear of violence from men.

Ending violence against women is not only an urgent human rights need—it is critical to ending AIDS. Up to 7 out of 10 women experience violence in their lifetime. Violence or the fear of violence can prevent women from negotiating safer sex. At the same time women living with HIV are often more vulnerable to violence, which can stop women from getting the HIV care and treatment they need.

Today, half of all people living with HIV are women. Every minute one young woman is infected with HIV. This is not acceptable. Only when we value a girl's health and welfare as highly as a boy's, only when we listen and act equally to women's voices—then can we have a chance at ending this epidemic.

On this International Women's Day, I am counting on you to stand together as caring communities. Let us reach for shared dignity, mutual respect and a renewed commitment to end violence against women and girls.

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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 to maximize results for the AIDS response. Learn more at unaids.org and connect with us on Facebook and Twitter.