

## **Financing and Resourcing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment In the Context of HIV and AIDS**

High Level Meeting on HIV and AIDS, United Nations, New York  
Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium  
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The side event titled, "Financing and Resourcing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the context of HIV and AIDS" was attended by over 250 men and women from government, multilaterals, NGOs, community based organisations, faith-based and youth organisations. As resources are crucial to implementing programmes on HIV and AIDS, this session provided an opportunity to understand what resources are available for women and how women's organisations access critical financing. The event recognised the increased feminisation of the pandemic and the need for all governments to implement gender-responsive budgets that address how the pandemic disproportionately affects women and girls.

A lack of attention to gender equality in the AIDS response continues to be evident. Care for people with AIDS is almost always ultimately home-based, and usually becomes the responsibility of women and girls in the form of unpaid labour. Even in countries where men are more infected with HIV – it is women who carry the burden of care.

The lack of gender equality in access to services is also evident in that resources are increasingly supporting male focused prevention programmes such as male circumcision. As governments implement male circumcision, women are placed at special risk. Women expressed concern that resource re-allocation to male circumcision should not take away from resources for women's empowerment and finances should not perpetuate programmes that undermine access to life saving tools like male and female condoms that allow for women to be protected during sex.

Gender equality and women's empowerment are often appendages to the AIDS response instead of being an integral component, which crosscut all programmatic and policy issues. Many existing national prevention, treatment and care strategies do not contribute to an environment supportive of gender equality, as they are not developed within the context of women's realities.

Women are almost always found in three places in national AIDS programmes:

1. Prevention strategies that focus on knowledge and condom use. In youth programmes, for example, young women are reflected as an indicator of having accurate information on HIV and AIDS, yet in reality, young women need more than knowledge to protect themselves; they need access to sexual and reproductive services and the ability to negotiate safe sex.
2. In treatment programmes that focus on Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) that protect the child but often neglect to protect the mother. Services for treatment and care of women living with HIV must be decentralised to promote marginalised access to services. PMTCT programmes must be revisited to ensure mothers are not treated as vessels and vectors, but that through preventing transmission from mother to child – the woman is also kept alive.
3. In sex work – where programmes focus on awareness raising and increasing knowledge but never address the underlying cause of sex work or addressing men who visit sex workers.

To ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment programmes are adequately financed and resourced based on women's realities, governments must fulfil promises made and be held accountable for not doing so. Resourcing women's empowerment means providing women with opportunity for decision-making and training that is followed by support and skills building for community mobilisation.

## Recommendations

HIV and AIDS policies should:

- Be formulated with the involvement of women, gender experts and women living with HIV at all levels. 'Nothing for us – without us.'
- Align with commitments to gender equality and women's rights, including the development of specific indicators as part of the "three ones", and the national monitoring and evaluation efforts
- Prioritise community-based actions for prevention and support
- Recognise and quantify women's unpaid care work. Women who are leading home-based care should be valued and paid. It is unacceptable for states not to offer support
- Give special attention to resourcing AIDS responses in conflict situations.

Programme priorities should:

- Include prevention programmes that focus on female controlled methods, ie female condom and microbicides
- Reflect a rights-based approach not only in name but in practice (i.e. law reform on inheritance rights and enforcement of laws regarding violence against women.)
- Invest in a range of initiatives to eliminate violence against women
- Adjust PMTCT (prevention of mother to child transmission) programmes so they serve as better entry points for care, support and treatment for women
- Ensure that male circumcision programmes are complemented by information on condom use and underscore the importance of male responsibility.

Financing mechanisms should:

- Review funding structures such as the Global Fund and assess what percentage of funding is allocated to women. Other national structures, such as the 'Three One's' must become more gender specific. Integrate indicators on gender equality within the context of HIV
- Fund the priorities of national governments as well as civil society priorities
- Collaborate with and view civil society as implementers of HIV programmes
- Financing modalities must be simplified so community institutions are able to access funding. Simplifying processes will ensure access to funds for community and women's empowerment groups and HIV+ women's networks
- Provide capacity building and technical support for monitoring and evaluating programmes
- Promote tools, such as gender-responsive budgeting, for planning, programming, monitoring and evaluating HIV and AIDS priorities
- Include women and other civil society in substantive monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Hosted by World YWCA, UNIFEM, Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, Church World Service, and Women Won't Wait



**Women **WON'T** wait**  
End HIV & Violence Against Women. **NOW.**



### About the World YWCA

The World YWCA is a global network of women and young women leading social and economic change in 125 countries. It advocates for peace, justice, human rights and care of the environment, and has been at the forefront of raising the status of women for over 150 years. The World YWCA develops women's leadership to find local solutions to the global inequalities women face.