

Women, TB and HIV fact sheet

**FIGHT AIDS
FIGHT TB
FIGHT NOW**

Background facts

HIV prevalence in women is highest in developing countries. This means that many women are also at serious risk from TB if services are not made more easily accessible to them.

TB is recognized as the single biggest infectious killer of women in the world, and accounts for more cases of maternal mortality than all other causes put together. More than one million women die needlessly from TB every year.

Data from WHO confirm that TB is the leading cause of death among women of reproductive age: more than 900 million women are infected with TB worldwide and TB accounts for 9% of deaths worldwide among women aged between 15 and 44.

In 2002, about half of all people living with HIV or AIDS worldwide were female and in sub-Saharan Africa – home to 70% of all HIV-infected people. More than half of all infected adults are women.

Women between the ages of 15 and 24 in settings of high HIV prevalence are increasingly more likely than men in the same age group to fall sick with TB. Women in this age group are also at greater risk from HIV infection. Among women sick with TB, at least a third die because they are undiagnosed or receive poor treatment.

Since TB affects women mainly in their economically and reproductively active years, the disease also has a heavy impact on their children and families. Children are at risk of contracting TB, because of close contact with their mothers.

Although global TB detection rates appear to be higher in men than in women, this may not reflect the real situation. Lower prevalence rates of TB among women, particularly in the 15–35 age group, may be the result of under notification of infected women.

Cultural, social and economic factors

A combination of various cultural, social and economic factors, especially in low-income countries, means that women often face difficulties in accessing health care. Therefore, by the time they attend clinics, TB and/or HIV can already be at a very advanced stage.

The stigmatization of women who are HIV-positive or who have TB discourages them from seeking treatment. Women have to overcome several barriers before they can easily access health care services. They are often unable to leave their home and work or they may need permission from their families to go to a clinic or to pay for treatment.

Empowering women

Women have long been key elements in the care and management of both TB and AIDS, not only in their own families but also in the wider community. Key features of women-only services are easy access, social support, and appropriate advice and treatment. Facilities should be women-centred, women-managed, and offer affordable, accessible services.

On a global level, programmes for TB control should respond to the special needs of women – in order to promote health and to reduce possibly unequal access to health care.

**With effective treatment
TB can be cured,
HIV managed,
and lives saved.**

www.unaids.org
www.stoptb.org

The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, launched in February 2004, is an informal grouping of partners and organizations working to mitigate the impact of AIDS on women and girls worldwide. It is a growing global, inclusive movement seeking to support, energize and drive AIDS-related programmes and projects to improve the daily lives of women and girls. The Coalition aims to build global and national advocacy to highlight the effects of HIV and AIDS on women and girls and to stimulate concrete, effective action. Efforts are focused on preventing new HIV infections, promoting equal access to treatment, addressing legal inequities and mitigating the impact of AIDS on women and girls.

The Coalition will bring technical expertise and spokespeople to the World AIDS Day activities in 2004. www.womenandaids.org

World AIDS Day 2004

Women, Girls, HIV and AIDS is the theme for World AIDS Day in 2004.

World AIDS Day marks progress made in the battle against the epidemic – and brings into focus remaining challenges, one of which is undeniably the need for greater joint TB/HIV programming.

World AIDS Day helps to raise awareness, political commitment and resources for the global effort. It is also a major focus for prevention activities, education and fighting prejudice. World AIDS Day reminds the world that HIV has not gone away, and that many things remain to be done.

For more information on plans for World AIDS Day, e-mail: wac@unaids.org

Stop TB Partnership



Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNAIDS
UNICEF-WFP-UNDP-UNFPA-UNODC
ILO-UNESCO-WHO-WORLD BANK



WORLD HEALTH
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