

Key Points: Women and Girls

THE CHALLENGE

Despite the great progress made against HIV, tuberculosis and malaria, adolescent girls and women continue to be disproportionately affected by these diseases, especially HIV. Gender inequalities and discrimination against women continue to fuel infections, and increase women's and girls' health risks.

Young women and girls are much more likely than young men and boys to contract HIV.

- Globally, almost 60 percent of new HIV infections among 15-24 year olds were contracted by girls and women¹; 7,000 girls² and women in this age bracket are infected with HIV every week. In the hardest-hit countries, girls account for more than 80 percent of all new HIV infections among adolescents.³
- HIV is the leading cause of death for women aged 15-44 worldwide.⁴
- Globally, adolescent girls and young women (15-24 years) are twice as likely to be at risk of HIV infection compared to boys and young men in the same age group.⁵

Sexual and gender-based violence increases a woman's vulnerability to HIV, and can result in physical, mental, sexual, reproductive health and other health problems.

- Recent global prevalence figures indicate that 35 percent of women worldwide have experienced either intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.⁶

Pregnant women are particularly susceptible to malaria, a disease that is an important cause of illness and death during pregnancy. It can also cause miscarriage, low birth weight of newborns, or premature birth.

While tuberculosis generally affects more men than women, it is among the top 5 causes of death for women aged 15 to 44 in low- and middle-income countries⁷.

Tuberculosis generally affects women in their prime, which has a devastating impact on their children and families.

THE OPPORTUNITY

The Global Fund makes strategic investments to improve the health of women and girls and promote gender equality, and has been steadily increasing its focus on women and girls. In 2010, approximately 46 percent of programs were focused on women and girls; **in 2015, approximately 60 percent of the Global Fund's spending benefited women and girls. That translates to investments of approximately US\$18 billion since 2002.**

Education can be a powerful tool in preventing HIV among adolescent girls. Reaching adolescent girls and young women with services that span across health, education and social protection sectors is a priority for the Global Fund.

- A recent study in Botswana showed that secondary school students who stayed in school for an extra year had an 8 percentage point lower risk of HIV infection about a decade later.⁸

- For sustainable impact, the Global Fund partnership is exploring investments to keep adolescent girls and young women in school and HIV-free. Keeping adolescent girls and young women in school not only reduces their vulnerabilities to HIV infection but has the potential to create a critical mass of healthy, educated and financially independent women who make well-informed choices about their lives.

Global Fund investments are reducing the number of AIDS-related deaths among women and girls. Between 2005 and 2015, the absolute number of AIDS-related deaths among women aged 15 years and above declined by 56 percent in 12 key African countries where the Global Fund invests, while declining 37 percent among men the same age. Each year, the number of women dying of AIDS-related deaths declined twice as fast as that of men.⁹

ARV therapy coverage is becoming available to more women, and more women are staying on treatment, contributing to fewer AIDS-related deaths among women and girls. In most affected countries such as South Africa, the percentage of women living with HIV who accessed treatment has doubled between 2010 and 2015, increasing from 21 percent to 53 percent.¹⁰

Global Fund investments are reducing the number of new HIV infections among women and girls. In 11 high-burden countries in Africa, Global Fund-supported programs have led to a 23 percent decline in infections among women between 2005 and 2014.

The Global Fund promotes gender equality and tailors its programs to the needs and rights of women and girls. Through Global Fund investments, more women are taking part in design and implementation of programs in their communities. At the country level, 40 percent of decision-makers in Global Fund grant committees are women.

To improve maternal, adolescent and child health, the Global Fund supports programs that prevent the transmission of HIV from mothers to their babies. Global Fund investments have put 3.6 million women on treatment to prevent transmission of HIV to their unborn babies. In Kenya, the Global Fund has integrated TB screening into the country's antenatal care platform. This has resulted in a 43 percent increase in the number of clients screened for TB during antenatal visits.

The Global Fund works with communities to ensure young children and pregnant women in particular are protected by mosquito nets. More than 659 million mosquito nets have been distributed through Global Fund-supported programs.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Focus On Women and Girls
http://www.theglobalfund.org/documents/publications/other/Publication_WomenGirls_FocusOn_en/
- Focus On Gender Equality
http://www.theglobalfund.org/documents/publications/other/Publication_GenderEquality_FocusOn_en/
- Global Fund Gender Equality Strategy:
http://www.theglobalfund.org/documents/core/strategies/Core_GenderEquality_Strategy_en
- Global Fund Gender Equality Strategy Action:
http://www.theglobalfund.org/documents/publications/other/Publication_GenderEqualityStrategy_ActionPlan_en
- Maximizing the Impact of Global Fund investments by Improving the Health of Women and Children:

http://www.theglobalfund.org/documents/publications/other/Publication_IERG2015_Report_en

- Global Fund Results Report 2015: <http://bit.ly/1iIaGkK>

¹ UNAIDS: <http://bit.ly/11HIK7A>

² UNAIDS: http://data.unaids.org/GCWA/gcwa_bg_prevention_en.pdf

³ Center for Strategic and International Studies: <http://bit.ly/1GQt701>

⁴ WHO: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs334/en/>

⁵ WHO: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs334/en/>

⁶ WHO: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/>

⁷ WHO: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs104/en/>

⁸ The Lancet: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214109X1500087X>

⁹ Global Fund Results Report 2016

¹⁰ UNAIDS 2015 (www.aidsinfoonline.org)