Violence against Women and Girls & HIV/AIDS

Women are disproportionately impacted by HIV/AIDS.

- Women make up 61% of adults living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa. Three-quarters of all women living with HIV/AIDS live in that region.[1]
- Worldwide, young women aged 15-24 are 1.6 times more likely to be infected with HIV than are males their age. In sub-Saharan Africa, they are three times more likely to be infected with HIV than are males their age.[2]
- Women are at least twice as likely to acquire HIV from men during sex as vice versa because of biological factors.[3]

Violence against women and girls is widespread and deeply rooted in cultural norms.

- One in three women around the world will be physically or sexually or emotionally abused in her lifetime.[4]
- One in five women will survive rape or attempted rape.[5]
- Between 20% and 50% of women indicate that their first sexual experience was forced.[6]
- 20% of girls and 10% of boys experience sexual abuse as a child.[7]
- Nearly 50% of all sexual assaults are committed against girls 15 years or younger.[8]
- In sub-Saharan Africa between 13% and 45% of women are assaulted by intimate partners during their lifetimes.
- 60% of women whose first sexual experience was forced later experience sexual violence at the hands of an intimate partner, compared with only 25% of those whose first sexual was consensual.[9]
- Between 16% and 47% of girls in African primary or secondary schools report sexual abuse or harassment by male teachers or classmates.[10]
- In many places both men and women believe that violence in the family is acceptable. A WHO study found that in Ethiopia 80% of women feel it is acceptable for a man to beat his wife for at least one reason.[11]
- A study in South Africa found that 27% of adolescent girls and 32% of adolescent boys felt that "forcing sex with someone you know is never sexual violence."[12]

Violence puts women and girls at risk of HIV and prevents them from caring for themselves.

- Violence against women is associated with an increased risk of acquiring sexually transmitted infections, a risk factor of HIV.[13]
- Violent sexual assault can cause trauma to the vaginal wall that allows easier access to HIV.[14]
- Fear of violence prevents women from negotiating safe sex.[15]
- A study in South Africa found that women who have been forced to have sex are almost six times more likely to use condoms *inconsistently* than those who have not been coerced.[16]
- Children who are sexually abused are more likely to engage in behaviors known to be risky for HIV as adults.[17] They are also more likely to experience sexual or domestic violence.[18]
- Boys who witness or experience family violence are more likely to commit rape.[19]
- Men who are violent toward their intimate partners have been found to be more likely to have multiple sexual partners than men who are not violent toward their partners.[20]
- Abused women are at greater risk of acquiring HIV,[21] and women living with HIV have more lifetime experience of violence than HIV-negative women.[22]
- A WHO study found that fear of violence was a barrier to HIV disclosure for an average of 25% of participating women. In some countries the proportion was as high as 86%.[23]
- Fear of violence prevents women from seeking voluntary counseling and testing for HIV, returning for their test results, or getting treatment if they are HIV positive or services to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission.[24]

[1] UNAIDS, *2007 AIDS Epidemic Update* (2007), at 18. Available at http://data.unaids.org/pub/EPISlides/2007/2007_epiupdate_en.pdf.
[2] UNFPA, *State of World Population 2005* (2005), at 51. Available at http://ww.wunfpa.org/swp/swpmain.htm.
[3] Jansen H, et al. *Forced Sex and Physical Violence in Brazil, Peru, and Thailand: WHO Multi-Country Results.* XIV International AIDS Conference. Barcelona, Spain, 2002.
[4] UNFPA 2005, at 67.
[5] Ibid.
[6] WHO, *Multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women* (2006), at 51. Available at http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who_multicountry_study/en/.
[7] UNICEF, *Child protection information sheet: Violence against children* (2006), at 5. Available at http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Child_Protection_Infomation_Sheets/pdf.
[8] UNFPA 2005, at 66.
[9] UNFPA 2005, at 65.
[10] World Bank, *Addressing violence against women within the education sector*. Available at http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/Education.pdf.
[11] WHO 2006, at 38-9.
[12] Vetten, L. & K. Bhana (2001). *Violence, vengeance and gender: A preliminary investigation into the links between violence against women and HIV/AIDS in South Africa*. Research report written for the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation. Available at http://www.csvr.org.za/papers/paplvkb.pdf.
[13] Koenig, Michael et al. "Coerced first intercourse and reproductive health among adolescent women in Rakai, Uganda: in *International Family Planning Perspectives*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (December 2004), at 157. Available at http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/journals/3015604.pdf.
[14] Jansen 2002.
[15] American Foundation for AIDS Research, *Women, sexual violence and HIV* (2005). Available at http://www.amfar.org.
[16] Ibid at 156.
[17] WHO, *World report on violence and health* (2002), at 164. Available at http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/chapters/en/index.html.
[18] Ibid at 157.
[19] Ibid at 98.
[20] WHO 2006, at 69.
[21] Heise, L., M. Ellsberg, and M. Gottemoeller (1999). "Ending violence against women" in *Population Reports*, Series L. No. 11.
[22] The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, *Stop violence against women, fight AIDS*. Available at http://www.womenandaids.unaids.org/themes/docs/UNAIDS%20VAW%20Brief.pdf.
[23] WHO 2006.
[24] Ogden, Jessica and Laura Nyblade, *Common at its core: HIV-related stigma across contexts* (2005). Available at http://www.icrw.org.