

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER VIOLENCE

November 25 - December 10, 2006



Violence Against Women and HIV/AIDS

FACT SHEET

Violence against women is a human rights violation that causes devastating impacts on the health of women and impedes a woman's right to equality, development, security and peace. The terms "violence against women" and "gender-based violence" are used to refer to a range of abuses committed against women that stem from gender inequality and women's subordinate status in society relative to men. In 1993, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action defined violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life." This definition includes violence occurring in the family, within the general community, and violence perpetrated or condoned by the state.

Forms of gender-based violence include, but are not limited to:

- domestic violence,
- sexual abuse,
- rape,
- sexual harassment,
- trafficking in women,
- forced prostitution, and
- harmful traditional practices.

In addition, women's multiple and intersecting identities based on factors such as class, race, ethnicity, religion, descent, sexuality and citizenship status can serve to increase their subordination and vulnerability to violence. It is estimated that one in three women throughout the world will suffer some form of gender-based violence in her lifetime.¹

Linkages between VAW and HIV

- Violence against women especially forced or coerced sex, increases women's vulnerability to HIV infection.
- Violence and fear of violence limits a woman's ability to negotiate safe sexual behavior even in consensual union
- Women who are infected with HIV or who are perceived to be infected may face violence and/or abandonment
- Fear of violence and stigma can dissuade women from seeking information on HIV/AIDS, getting tested for HIV, disclosing their HIV status, and seeking treatment and counseling.
- Since violence can affect women's willingness to be tested, it can also have a detrimental effect on larger HIV control, treatment, and prevention programmes.

Strengthening Resistance: Confronting Violence Against Women and HIV/AIDS

CWGL released its new report at the international AIDS conference in August 2006. Strengthening Resistance focuses on the points of intersection in the social, political and public health crises of violence against women and HIV/AIDS. For more information, please visit <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/globalcenter/publications/strengthening.htm>.

¹ Heise, L., M. Ellsberg and M. Gottemoeller. 1999. *Ending Violence Against Women*. Population Reports, Series L, No. 11. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health, Population Information Program.