

Women4Global Fund (W4GF) Statement for World AIDS Day 2024

"Take the Rights Path: My Health, My Right!"

As the global community marks World AIDS Day 2024 on December 1st, under the theme, **"Take the Rights Path: My Health, My Right!"** [Women4Global Fund \(W4GF\)](#) calls for urgent action to uphold the rights of women in all of their diversity, living with and affected by HIV. While significant progress has been made toward ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030, stark gender inequalities, systemic discrimination and stigma, and structural violence against women and girls in all their diversity remain major barriers to achieving this goal. Especially amid climate change, armed conflicts and a posed gender backlash with increasing anti-rights movements.

As a global movement led by women in all their diversity, W4GF amplifies the voices of women and girls, [in influencing Global Fund policies and programs to be inclusive, rights-based, and gender-transformative](#). W4GF focuses on ensuring that women and girls in all their diversity are not left behind in the fight against AIDS.

The 2023 UNAIDS report, ["Take the Rights Path to End AIDS."](#) highlights how restrictive laws, gender-based violence, and limited access to education and healthcare disproportionately harm women and girls, stalling progress. With 570 adolescent girls and young women acquiring HIV daily¹, urgent action is needed to center women in HIV responses. W4GF joins this global call for action, requesting a direct and sustained focus on ensuring that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are not sidelined but prioritized as central pillars in achieving the 2030 goals. Women in all their diversity: At the heart of the HIV response

W4GF focuses attention on women and girls in all of our diversity and our intersections, addressing issues faced by women living and/or affected by HIV, TB, and Malaria including heterosexual, lesbian, bisexual, intersex, non-binary, transgender women, sex workers over 18 years old, and adolescents, girls, and young women. We address the challenges of indigenous, displaced, migrant, and refugee women; and women with disabilities. We face unique challenges and increased risks, including a higher risk of HIV transmission, limited access to life-saving comprehensive healthcare services and treatments, and heightened vulnerability and risk of experiencing gender-based violence, discrimination, and stigma.

For W4GF, these realities reinforce the need for transformative action that not only addresses the biomedical aspects of the pandemic but also dismantles the structural gender inequities that continue to put women and girls at risk.

¹https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/2024-unaids-global-aids-update-adolescent-girls-young-women_en.pdf

W4GF stands firm in calling for urgent and targeted action to address these challenges.

1. Governments and the international donor community must integrate gender equality and gender-transformative approaches into national and global HIV strategies, prioritizing structural interventions to [reduce GBV, stigma, and discrimination](#), and ensure financial empowerment for all women and girls in all of their diversity
2. It is essential to commit fully to the Global Fund's [8th Replenishment](#) to ensure increased funding for tackling HIV through a human-rights-based and gender-transformative approach. This commitment is pivotal in fulfilling global declarations and advancing equitable, sustainable progress in addressing HIV, TB, and Malaria as public health threats.
3. Decision-making spaces in global health must reflect the lived realities of women living with HIV. W4GF urges increased representation and meaningful participation of women-led movements in national and global HIV program development and resource allocation, [acknowledging women's role in the Global Fund Country Coordinating Mechanisms \(CCMs\)](#)
4. Healthcare systems must provide gender-transformative HIV care continuum, rights-based HIV services, including Global Fund Country programmes that integrate:
 - Access to self-testing, PrEP, post-exposure prophylaxis, and ART for all who need them.
 - Integrated sexual and reproductive health services.
 - Provide comprehensive sexuality education and HIV awareness programs.
 - People-centred [harm reduction programmes](#)
 - Peer-to-peer counselling and community-based services
 - Link HIV comprehensive care with other health services, including TB, Malaria, mental health, and other NCDs and STIs.

Implement gender-sensitive and transformative health education programs to raise awareness about Female genital schistosomiasis (FGS)² and HIV, and their interconnections. Ensuring health financing mechanisms include funding to integrate FGS care into existing health services³, scaling up MDA programs in endemic areas. 5. W4GF joins UNAIDS in demanding the decriminalisation of same-sex relations, sex work, and drug use. These criminalising laws fuel stigma and discrimination, deter access to health services, and perpetuate GBV.

6. W4GF urges global health leaders, funders, and pharmaceutical developers to prioritize the deployment of lenacapavir for women and girls at most risk of HIV; especially for the majority of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean that have been excluded from the voluntary licensing

²In sub-Saharan Africa alone, FGS affects an estimated 56 million women and girls. Research indicates that women with Female Genital Schistosomiasis (FGS) may face a significantly higher risk of acquiring HIV. Estimates suggest this risk can be 3 to 4 times greater compared to women without FGS. The heightened susceptibility is likely due to chronic inflammation and lesions caused by the Schistosoma parasites, which compromise the genital mucosa and facilitate HIV transmission. This association highlights the need for integrated approaches to address FGS as part of broader HIV prevention strategies, especially in endemic regions where both conditions are prevalent. For further details, refer to studies that explore this link in depth, such as those available in The Lancet and PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases journals

³ Frontline AIDS, a policy brief on Female Genital Schistosomiasis (FGS):

<https://frontlineaids.org/resources/addressing-the-unmet-needs-of-women-and-girls-in-africa-through-fgs-integration/>

agreement. Guaranteeing the implementation of the TRIPS agreements is key to prioritizing health benefits over commercial ones.

7. W4GF strongly urges stakeholders to join and actively deliver on the commitments of the Global Partnership for Action to Eliminate All Forms of HIV-related Stigma and Discrimination. This includes creating concrete action plans with measurable outcomes, fostering collaboration among civil society, UN agencies, and affected communities, and ensuring consistent monitoring and reporting on progress to meet the goals of ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030; with gender-disaggregated data.

8. [Funding women-led responses is essential for sustainable HIV prevention and comprehensive care.](#)

W4GF calls for gender-responsive and earmarked budgeting and increased financial support from the Global Fund Partnership, directed to women's organisations and gender-transformative programmes. accountable.

Conclusion

As we approach 2030, the fight against HIV stands at a critical crossroads. Success depends on unwavering commitment to justice, gender equity, and the rights of all women and girls, in all their diversity. Governments and the international donor community have the power to transform this vision into reality by prioritising sustained, flexible investments in gender-transformative health systems, community-led initiatives, and women-led organisations. These investments are not just a matter of funding—they are a matter of fairness, dignity, and shared humanity.

The time to act is now. Failing to prioritise these efforts risks not only stalling progress but also deepening the inequalities that fuel the pandemic. By honouring their commitments and channelling resources into feminist and women-led movements and grassroots solutions, we can ensure that no women and girls are left behind and that the world takes a decisive step toward ending AIDS as a public health threat. Together, we can create a future rooted in gender equity, where health and rights are universally upheld.

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