



## WORLD AIDS CAMPAIGN

### POSITION: Gender Equality

#### ***Purpose***

The purpose of this Position Paper is to share with our stakeholders, including constituencies, partners, policy makers and donors, the ideas, commitments and standards of the World AIDS Campaign in relation to promoting gender equality, women's rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights. The positions reflected here are key to fulfilling the mission of the World AIDS Campaign in effectively reducing the transmission of HIV and the impact of AIDS and are in keeping with international human rights standards and instruments.

#### ***Problem***

Gender inequality affects the rights of all people to equality, dignity and freedom. It fuels the transmission of HIV and increases the impact of AIDS:

***Women and girls*** are still oppressed because of their gender in many parts of the world. They often lack independent control over their own sexuality, bodies and lives and are expected to take the major role in unpaid labour such as care-giving. Women may also have less access to and influence over the use of income, services and resources. This in turn, means that many women become increasingly vulnerable to infection with HIV and to the impacts of AIDS as well as to violence. This is especially true for women who are poor, have one or more disabilities, are young, of colour or ethnic minorities, use drugs, engage in sex work; and women who live in certain geographic locations [conflict and post conflict situations, rural/urban, global north/south] and women who are in same-sex relations or bisexual, amongst others. Women who are poor and live with HIV and AIDS are more vulnerable to violence and other socioeconomic problems and violations;

***Men and boys***, in many parts of the world, still hold the decision making power over the sexuality, bodies and lives of women. Some men may be forced to comply with or choose behaviours that are deemed 'masculine' and which consequently put them at greater risk of acquiring HIV. Masculinity is understood in many parts of the world to mean that amongst other behaviours men should engage in high risk sexual practice (and even resist promotion of safer sex practices). This in turn, means that sexual and reproductive health services do not tend to engage men and boys and there is a lack of support to challenge social norms on violence against women and girls;

***Transgender*** people who do not fit into the traditional gender roles of 'man' and 'woman' are often subjected to discrimination and violations of their human rights due to ignorance and hostility directed at them as a result of their gender identity. This deepens their vulnerability to HIV and AIDS as well as to violence, hate crime and other negative socio-economic problems such as poverty and unemployment. Transgender people are largely still invisible to planners responsible for HIV prevention and AIDS impact mitigation, which is compounded by the failure to regularly collect disaggregated data;

***Bisexual people, lesbian women, gay men and men who have sex with men are*** recognised as being vulnerable to infection with HIV and the impacts of AIDS as well as to violence, including hate crimes by both state and non state actors. The recognition that many lesbian women have sex with men even whilst identifying as lesbian, and the growing incidence of rape and sexual violence against lesbian women, increases their vulnerability to HIV infection and the impacts of AIDS. Laws that criminalise same sex relationships further entrench the stigma and discrimination against these communities and violate their human rights;

### ***The World AIDS Campaign: Translating commitment into action***

The recognition and understanding of the impact of gender (and related inequalities) as key factors driving HIV transmission and increasing the impact of AIDS, has led to commitments being made by states, civil society and many in the private sector. Strong and sustained leadership is needed to ensure that these commitments are translated into action through strategic work on addressing gender inequality, women's rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights at all levels from the local to the global.

***The goal: we commit to becoming, progressively, a part of a global movement to think about, recognise and transform gender power relations in society so that women, girls, men and boys can and do access their sexual and reproductive health and rights and are equal, free and live in dignity;***

The World AIDS Campaign will strengthen our commitment to addressing gender inequality, using a human rights approach:

1. ***Women's rights:*** we will actively support the work of partners to increasingly understand and address gender inequality so that women are able to access their right to dignity, freedom and equality, exercise their sexual and reproductive health and rights and live free of violence of any kind;
2. ***Work with men:*** we will collaborate with partners to ensure that work with men addresses the unequal power relations that still exist between many men and women, as well as ensuring that men are able to address societal ideas of masculinity and the links that make them vulnerable to HIV infection and the impacts of AIDS;
3. ***Transgender people:*** we will work with partners to increase the understanding of stakeholders and their capacity to address the vulnerability of transgender people to violence, HIV and AIDS and advocate for the rights of transgender people together with others;
4. ***Lesbian women, bisexual people, gay men and men who have sex with men:*** we will work with partners to ensure that the vulnerability of these communities is recognised and addressed, so sexual orientation is not a barrier to their accessing HIV and AIDS and anti-violence information, services and resources;
5. ***Agency and leadership:*** we will facilitate and promote the leadership of those most affected by gender inequality, recognising in all our work that they are not simply powerless victims and can be and already are powerful advocates and leaders in the local and global response to HIV and AIDS;
6. ***Standard setting:*** we will work with partners to set, track and monitor and meet standards for meaningful action locally, nationally and globally to confront gender and related inequalities and ensure that we move beyond the rhetoric to sustained, strategic and concerted action;
7. ***Organisational culture:*** we will promote an organisational culture where social justice is central: where violations of women's rights, gender inequality, homophobia and other forms of inequality are named, openly discussed, debated and addressed; where we ensure access to services, including HIV prevention and access to treatment within the organisation; where we hold ourselves accountable for meeting the standards we have set; where we develop and implement policies, plans and systems to facilitate this work and monitor and evaluate the impact of this work in the transformation of society so that all people exercise agency and power in accessing their rights.