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HIV and AIDS REPORTER: focus on UNGASS
16 May 2006

produced by the [IDS Health and Development Information](#) team
in collaboration with [Eldis](#) and the [DFID Health Resource Centre](#)

This is our monthly email bulletin, bringing together research to inform policy debates on HIV and AIDS in developing countries.

The HIV and AIDS Reporter aims to provide readers with a more in-depth look at a particular area of HIV-related policy. This month's theme is [UNGASS](#). The bulletin also features summaries of new documents and other additions to the [HIV and AIDS Resource Guide](#).

All documents listed below are available free on the web. If you are unable to access any of these materials online and would like to receive a copy of a document as an email attachment, please contact i.young@ids.ac.uk.

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Feature: UNGASS

2006 marks the five-year anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS (DoC) by the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS). In the first worldwide commitment to fighting HIV and AIDS, the declaration acknowledged how HIV and AIDS constitute a global emergency. It set time-bound goals and targets aimed at stopping and reversing the spread of HIV and AIDS, and covered broad areas such as leadership, prevention, care, support and treatment, and human rights.

Central to the DoC is the recognition that gender equality and the empowerment of women are fundamental to reducing the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV. It calls for the adoption of "national strategies that promote the advancement of women and women's full enjoyment of all human rights; promotes shared responsibility of men and women to ensure safe sex; and empower women to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality to increase their ability to protect themselves from HIV infection."

As many governments have fallen short of achieving targets set for 2003 and 2005, the anniversary and follow-up meeting – taking place from 31 May – 2 June 2006 – will be an important occasion. The aims of this session will be to: review and recommit to implementation of the DoC, evaluate challenges and obstacles, and reassess what needs to be done in order to

effectively combat the pandemic. The role of civil society in this process is critical. Approximately 800 NGOs have been invited to participate and a civil society task force has been convened to advise the UN on civil society participation in this meeting. Moreover, a number of civil society organisations have been actively involved in monitoring progress in DoC commitments and targets, which will feed into the review meeting. The outcome of the UNGASS Review will be a political declaration, to be adopted by UN Member states at the end of the three-day meeting

In preparation for key events in 2006, including the UNGASS review, *With Women Worldwide: A Compact to End HIV/AIDS* was convened by the International Women's Health Coalition. This Compact argues that while progress has been made to increase access to treatment for people living with HIV and AIDS, the numbers of people infected continue to rise dramatically. Without massive strengthening of prevention efforts, particularly for women, the number of people infected and who need treatment will continue to rise. Consequently, they call for girls' and women's empowerment to be at the centre of a multi-sectoral response to the global pandemic.

Many thanks to Zonny Woods of the [International Women's Health Coalition](#) for collaborating on this feature.

Related resources

UNGASS specific resources

- [2005 Country Progress Reports](#) - Progress reports submitted by many countries on how they are meeting their commitments
- [Civil Society Shadow Reports](#) - Useful information on civil society position papers, shadow reports, national reports, etc, information in Spanish , English, French and Russian
- [UNGASS HIV.org](#) - Overview of UNGASS history, critical issues and key documents.

Other related resources

- [With Women Worldwide](#) - Copies of the compact and information on IWHC and partner organisations
- [The Johannesburg position on HIV/AIDS and women's and girls' rights in Africa](#) - Statement issued by a number of women's groups in Africa at the African Women's Regional Consultation on Women's Rights and HIV/AIDS
- [The road towards universal access](#) - Key documents, reports and information on global consultations
- [International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS](#) - International network of HIV-positive women
- [Global Coalition on Women and AIDS](#) - alliance of civil society groups, networks of women with HIV and AIDS, governments and UN organizations.
- [UNIFEM's Gender and HIV/AIDS portal](#) - Web portal that provides information on the gender dimensions of the HIV/AIDS epidemic

Recommended readings

1. [Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS](#)

2. [Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS: five years later](#)
 3. [Civil society recommendations for the UNGASS review political declaration](#)
 4. [With Women Worldwide – A compact to end HIV/AIDS](#)
 5. [Our voice, our future: young people report on progress made on the declaration of commitment to HIV/AIDS, 2005](#)
 6. [The UNGASS, gender and women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS in Latin America and the Caribbean](#)
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Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS

Produced by: United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS), 2001

This declaration, from the 26th United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS), acknowledges that HIV and AIDS constitute a global emergency, and states that there is a need for an urgent, coordinated and sustained response to the epidemic. The declaration also recognises that: poverty and illiteracy are among the principal contributing factors to HIV; stigma, silence, discrimination and denial undermine prevention, care and treatment efforts; and gender equality and the empowerment of women are fundamental elements in the reduction of girls' and women's vulnerability to HIV and AIDS.

The declaration sets time-bound goals and targets aimed at stopping and reversing the spread of HIV and AIDS. It identifies essential elements for an effective response to the epidemic, including: leadership, prevention, care, support and treatment, and human rights. Specifically, it declares that leadership by governments in combating HIV and AIDS is essential and their efforts should be complemented by the full and active participation of civil society, the business community and the private sector. The declaration also outlines how gender equality and the empowerment of women is fundamental to reducing vulnerabilities and ensuring full entitlement to human rights.

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/cf/rdr/rdr.cfm?doc=DOC21191>

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Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS: five years later

Produced by: Secretary General, United Nations, 2006

This report, from the United Nations Secretary General, provides an update on progress in the global response to HIV and AIDS since the 2001 special session. The report is based on nearly 120 country progress reports from the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) as well as over 30 reports from civil society, and national and global surveys. The report finds that, five years since the special session, many countries have failed to fulfil the key targets and milestones for 2005.

The report argues that there has been progress made against AIDS in the last five years, including greater resources, stronger national policy frameworks, wider access to treatment and prevention services and broad consensus on the principles of effective country-level action. However, success requires willingness on all global actors to be committed to sustaining the response over the long term. The report highlights the need to: embrace the "Three Ones" principles in order to accelerate scaling up to universal access to treatment; address human

and institutional capacity needs; accelerate technological innovation and ensure equitable access; address the fundamental drivers of the epidemic, such as poverty, illiteracy, economic and gender inequality; and embrace new ways of working together. [adapted from author]

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/cf/rdr/rdr.cfm?doc=DOC21206>

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Civil society recommendations for the UNGASS review political declaration

Produced by: International Council of AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO), 2005

This document outlines recommendations from civil society for the UNGASS (United Nations General Assembly Special Session) review meeting. The document argues that political failings stand in the way of effectively addressing the epidemic. These include lack of adequate resources, disregard for human rights, inattention to health workers and health systems, refusal to base interventions on evidence and financing and trade policies that undermine access to drugs. The authors argue that these barriers can and must be removed and that a comprehensive response must take into account the needs to deliver on the commitment of universal access to prevention, treatment and care interventions, along with the need to develop better tools, including drugs, diagnostic and prevention technologies.

Governments need to strongly reaffirm all international commitments on HIV and AIDS, recognise the role of human rights abuses, reaffirm gender equality and poverty eradication, and reaffirm the commitment to the GIPA (Greater Involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS) principles to involve people living with HIV and AIDS in all aspects of the response. The recommendations also call for: the involvement of civil society to be ensured and enabled at all levels of decision making and; a commitment to universal access to prevention, care and treatment, including numerical targets and clear assignments of responsibility.

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/cf/rdr/rdr.cfm?doc=DOC????>

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With women worldwide: a compact to end HIV/AIDS

Produced by: With Women Worldwide, 2006

This compact, from With Women Worldwide, argues that sexual and reproductive rights are a pivotal but neglected priority in HIV and AIDS policy, programming and resource allocation. Failure to protect the human rights of girls and women, including their right to health and right to live free of sexual coercion and violence, fuels the pandemic. It claims that universal access to sexual and reproductive health services and education, and the protection of sexual and reproductive rights, are essential to ending it.

The compact calls on HIV and AIDS decision makers at all levels to redefine “high risk” by recognising that women and girls are at serious risk and have the right to all services related to the prevention, treatment, care and support as part of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services. Decision making needs to be expanded to ensure that women infected and affected by HIV and AIDS are full participants in decision making, at all levels, to ensure that decisions reflect the realities and needs of women. The compact also demands that: leadership is exercised to promote policies and laws against discrimination and sexual violence; and resources are directed towards comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, sexuality education and subsidised female condoms and microbicides. [adapted from author]

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/cf/rdr/rdr.cfm?doc=DOC21518>

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Our voice, our future: young people report on progress made on the declaration of commitment to HIV/AIDS

Author(s): Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS; Global Youth Partners

Produced by: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 2005

This report, written by young people from around the world, reviews the progress made on the Declaration of Commitment (DoC) on HIV/AIDS, adopted by the Member States at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS) in June 2001. The document examines political and financial commitments, access to information services and youth participation. Key findings include: policies do not recognise the heterogeneity of young people; policies ensuring the rights of people living with HIV and AIDS are insufficient; HIV and AIDS are not always addressed by the Ministries under which 'young people' fall; many young people do not have access to youth health services; and young people are not included as equal partners in HIV and AIDS programmes and services.

The report recommends that governments address the needs of young people in their national AIDS programmes and policies and in national youth policies. It also recommends that governments scale up funding for programmes that work with and for young people on HIV and AIDS, especially with youth-driven initiatives. Other recommendations include: increasing coverage of comprehensive, youth-friendly information and services that include skills-based education, voluntary and confidential counselling and testing, and condoms; and working in full partnership with young people on policymaking and programme design, implementation and evaluation.

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/cf/rdr/rdr.cfm?doc=DOC18885>

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The UNGASS, gender and women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS in Latin America and the Caribbean

Author(s): Anderson, A.; Marcovici, K.; Taylor, K.

Produced by: HIV/AIDS Impact on Education Clearinghouse, 2002

This paper discusses the effect of gender roles, power relations and sexual behaviour on the spread of HIV and AIDS in the Latin American and Caribbean Region, and it specifically explores women's vulnerability to the epidemic. It argues that although the prevalence and urgency of the AIDS pandemic is forcing the public health sector to gradually discuss issues of sexuality and power in sexual relationships, these links have yet to be fully operationalised in health policies and programs.

Based on the commitments made in the 2001 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS), the paper puts forward some policy recommendations for the incorporation of gender into HIV and AIDS activities:

- empower couples to communicate and negotiate openly about sexual needs, desires and perceived risks
- empower girls and boys, women and men by increasing their access to education,

literacy and information about sexual and reproductive health

- work with men to explore the effects of masculinity, violence, power and control on relationships and sexual health
- improve sexual and reproductive health services for all, their coverage, accessibility and gender sensitivity
- empower women to participate in community and national decision-making about HIV and AIDS issues
- incorporate a gender perspective and sexual and reproductive health services into crisis response plans, in order to ensure that a crisis does not worsen the spread of HIV
- increase the advocacy for microbicides
- address the impact of gender norms and stereotypes on women living with HIV and AIDS and the barriers to services which they face
- acknowledge that women are the primary caregivers within the family and community, and that this work is unpaid
- approach women's health from a holistic perspective
- work with key population groups which are at a high risk for HIV transmission.

[adapted from author]

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/cf/rdr/rdr.cfm?doc=DOC14405>

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Summaries of other documents in the HIV and AIDS Resource Guide

1. ['Nothing about us without us': greater, meaningful involvement of people who use illegal drugs: a public health, ethical, and human rights imperative](#)
2. [Spending requirement presents challenges for allocating prevention funding under the President's plan for AIDS relief](#)
3. [HIV/AIDS: thinking through the politics of country responses](#)

"Nothing about us without us": greater, meaningful involvement of people who use illegal drugs: a public health, ethical, and human rights imperative

Author(s): Jürgens, R.

Produced by: Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, 2005

This paper, from the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal network, examines why it is important to increase meaningful involvement of people who use illegal drugs in the response to HIV and hepatitis C (HCV), and how this can be done. The author argues that people who use drugs

represent a significant proportion of people who contract HIV and there are significant public health imperatives for involving people living with HIV and those most at risk. The author also highlights that all people should have the right to be involved in decisions affecting their lives. This means that meaningful involvement of people who use illegal drugs and people living with HIV is fundamental to an ethical, human rights based response to HIV.

The paper makes several recommendations aimed at ensuring greater, meaningful and sustained involvement of people who use drugs in all aspects of responses to HIV and AIDS. These include ensuring: explicit recognition by all health agencies and levels of government of the unique value of organisations of people who use illegal drugs; funding and capacity building initiatives for these groups; and full participation in all consultations, committees and fora where policies, interventions or services are planned, discussed, researched, determined, or evaluated with adequate support, training and financial compensation. [adapted from author]

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/cf/rdr/rdr.cfm?doc=DOC21140>

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Spending requirement presents challenges for allocating prevention funding under the President's plan for AIDS relief

Produced by: Government Accountability Office (GAO), US Congress, 2006

This report considers what effects the President's Plan for AIDS relief (PEPFAR) restrictions on funding, including abstinence-only prevention requirements, have had on country teams' ability to implement adequate prevention strategies. The report finds that restrictions – that two-thirds of allocated prevention funds be spent on abstinence/faithfulness (AB) activities – have presented serious challenges for country teams. Firstly, two-thirds of country teams reported ambiguities in how to implement the prevention ABC (abstinence, be faithful, use condoms) model in accordance with funding requirements. Secondly, funding restrictions limit teams' abilities to design and implement prevention programmes that are integrated and responsive to local prevention needs. While some smaller teams were exempt from these restrictions, the report found that remaining teams were required to spend more on AB activities, for the entire programme to achieve funding requirements.

Because the funding restrictions challenge the ability of country teams to allocate prevention resources in a manner consistent with the PEPFAR sexual transmission prevention strategy, GAO recommends that the Secretary of State direct the Global AIDS Coordinator to collect and report information on the effects of the abstinence-until-marriage spending requirement's on prevention programming. The report also recommends that this information be used to assess whether the requirement should apply only to the HIV/AIDS Initiative Account. [adapted from author]

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/cf/rdr/rdr.cfm?doc=DOC21380>

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HIV/AIDS: thinking through the politics of country responses

Authors: Dickinson, C.

Produced by: HLSP Institute, UK, 2006

This technical approach paper considers how politics plays a role in country response to HIV and AIDS. It argues that greater analysis of the political dimensions of these responses can and should be used to understand how and why governments respond to HIV and AIDS, and how the design and implementation of interventions can be made more effective. The paper outlines

how political analysis is important and uses country examples to highlight key political issues that have significant influence on HIV and AIDS responses at country level.

Critical factors can be the legacy of a country's political and social history and the role of a country's political systems and institutions. Other factors include: the pattern of emerging political incentives for responding to HIV and AIDS; the basis and nature of relationships between key institutions and sectors involved in the response; and the relationship between the state, donor and non-governmental sectors. The authors concludes that if a country response is to be effective, it must reflect its political and institutional context, and that the design of HIV and AIDS programmes and implementation structures should be rooted in a broader analysis of a country's political economy. [adapted from author]

Available online at: <http://www.eldis.org/cf/rdr/rdr.cfm?doc=DOC21229>

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See the complete list of new additions, announcements, job adverts at: www.eldis.org/hiv aids/

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- Health Resource Guide - www.eldis.org/health
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- HIV and AIDS Resource Guide - www.eldis.org/hiv aids/

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