



PRESS RELEASE

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UNIFEM, UNAIDS and Johnson & Johnson Announce Grants for Combined Strategies to End Violence against Women and Prevent HIV and AIDS

Five Countries Benefit from UN-Private Sector Partnership

United Nations, New York — UNIFEM, UNAIDS and Johnson & Johnson today announced that they are providing grants to organizations in five countries to address links between gender-based violence and the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The grants will be provided by Johnson & Johnson through the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, a multilateral funding mechanism administered by UNIFEM. The Trust Fund became operational 10 years ago and has so far awarded some \$13 million to 226 initiatives in more than 100 countries.

The five new grantees include organizations from Botswana, the Dominican Republic, India, Nigeria and Vietnam. Each will pursue innovative strategies to raise awareness, uphold laws, provide medical assistance, train service providers and reduce stigma and discrimination to empower women.

“Violence against women and HIV are pandemics that deny women’s human rights and devastate individual lives and societies,” said UNIFEM Executive Director Noeleen Heyzer. “We welcome the opportunity to work through public-private partnerships to invest in innovative strategies. Scaled up, they can become part of national development strategies to achieve lasting change.”

The grants mark the second year of a partnership between UNIFEM and Johnson & Johnson dedicated to reducing gender-based violence and the spread of HIV/AIDS. The partnership supports initiatives aimed at reducing gender-based violence to lower rates of HIV/AIDS among women and strengthens efforts to reduce violence that prevents HIV-positive women and girls from seeking justice and obtaining treatment and care.

The partnership was facilitated through the UNAIDS-led Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, of which UNIFEM is a member. The coalition has identified ending violence against women as a priority for lowering women’s vulnerability to HIV and improving their access to health care.

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“UNIFEM has worked tirelessly to reduce or eliminate conditions that profoundly harm women and girls. Johnson & Johnson has a longstanding commitment to women, families and communities and we are honored to support the Trust Fund’s work to help women who have become infected with HIV as a result of violence or who suffer abuse due to AIDS-related stigma,” said Julie McHugh, Company Group Chairman, Virology, Johnson & Johnson, and new member of the Leadership Council of the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS. “Partnerships between business and international organizations such as UNAIDS and UNIFEM make an important contribution in helping to break this terrible cycle and restore the dignity of vulnerable groups of women.”

Globally, violence against women is both a cause and a consequence of HIV/AIDS: women facing violence within intimate relationships often cannot negotiate safer sex practices, such as condom use. Rape and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation also spread the virus. In addition to untenable levels of stigma and discrimination from the community, women who test positive for HIV are often subjected to physical abuse from partners and can face eviction from their homes. Further, as a result of such stigma associated with HIV/AIDS, they are prevented from obtaining life-saving medical care and treatment.

These issues underscore the concern that women’s vulnerability to HIV/AIDS is attributed to social roots, not just biological ones. Their subordinate position in many societies can make it impossible for them to protect themselves from HIV.

Dr. Peter Piot, Executive Director of UNAIDS, welcomed the grants as a contribution to the global fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic: “Violence makes women more susceptible to HIV infection and the fear of violent male reactions – physical and psychological – prevents many women from trying to find out more about HIV, discourages them from getting tested and stops them from getting treatment.”

Specifically, the grants will go to initiatives in the following countries:

Botswana, Ministry of Labor and Home Affairs, Women’s Affairs Department: Building capacity among judiciary, police, non-governmental organizations and traditional leaders to detect and respond to violence against women and HIV/AIDS while developing and implementing laws that address this issue.

Dominican Republic, Colectivo Mujer y Salud: Training local service providers, reaching at-risk populations along the Haitian border with promotional events that aim to raise awareness of violence against women and its links to HIV/AIDS and integrating gender perspectives into the national Law on AIDS.

India, Breakthrough: Multiple communications tools, including mass media campaigns, a traveling video van and peer counselors, will raise awareness about women’s rights and different forms of violence against women targeting high-prevalence states of Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka.

Nigeria, Civil Resource Development and Documentation Centre in partnership with ActionAID International: Strengthening legislation and advocacy on violence against women through community dialogue, media campaigns and training of government officials with a focus on women living with HIV/AIDS and community groups that support them.

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Vietnam, Center for Reproductive and Family Health in partnership with Vietnam

Women's Union: Improved care and counseling services and public outreach focusing on sexual health and rights will reach women and girls from ethnic minorities along the Vietnam-China border, with a focus on those who have been trafficked into forced prostitution.

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About UNIFEM

UNIFEM is the women's fund at the United Nations. It provides financial and technical assistance to innovative programmes and strategies to foster women's empowerment and gender equality. Placing the advancement of women's human rights at the centre of all of its efforts, UNIFEM focuses its activities on reducing feminized poverty; ending violence against women; reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls; and achieving gender equality in democratic governance in times of peace as well as war. More information: www.unifem.org

About Johnson & Johnson

Johnson & Johnson is the world's most comprehensive and broadly based manufacturer of health care products, as well as a provider of related services, for the consumer, pharmaceutical, and medical devices and diagnostics markets. The more than 200 Johnson & Johnson operating companies employ approximately 122,000 men and women and sell products throughout the world.

About the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS

The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS is a worldwide alliance of decision makers, UN organizations, community leaders, programme implementers, advocates and networks of women living with HIV. The Global Coalition was launched by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the main advocate for global action on AIDS. The Coalition works at global, regional, and national levels to highlight the impact of AIDS on women and girls and to mobilize action that enables women and girls to live healthy lives in a world with AIDS. For more information, visit womenandaids.unaids.org.