

# Statement

## Statement by UNAIDS Executive Director Human Rights Day, 10 December 2007

**Geneva, 10 December 2007** – Today, the world marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with a focus on “universality”.

UNAIDS welcomes this focus. The universality of human rights is a fundamental prerequisite to achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support – agreed by the world’s governments in 2006.

Achieving universal access will save lives, prevent millions of new HIV infections, and improve quality of life. It will also represent a major step toward the realization of the rights to the highest attainable standard of health, to gender equality, and to non-discrimination.

But it depends on realizing all rights – civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights – for all people, whoever they are and wherever they live. Only then will women, children, the poor, migrants, refugees, sex workers, drug users, men who have sex with men be in a position to avoid HIV infection, or if infected, live full and productive lives with HIV.

And it depends on people living with HIV having the same rights to dignity, justice and non-discrimination as anyone else. Yet stigma and discrimination, based on HIV status, still threatens human dignity in countries and communities across the globe.

But today, we are a long way from universality in the response to HIV.

In many countries, women are particularly poorly served. In 2005, just 11 per cent of women living with HIV have access to services that would reduce the likelihood of transmitting HIV to their child. Authorities fail to prevent or prosecute for violence against women and girls – within the home, the community or in the context of armed conflict. And there are continued reports of positive women being coerced into abortion or sterilisation.

Children do not get what they need to protect themselves against HIV. In schools, young people do not receive the information they need about HIV, safer sex, sexuality and condoms, nor are girls protected from sexual violence in schools; and children living with HIV do not receive sufficient paediatric treatment for HIV.

Drug users remain largely ignored. In 2005 only 8 per cent of people who inject drugs receive some type of HIV prevention service. Providing treatment for drug addiction or HIV infection is often blocked by criminal sanctions against drug use.

Today, UNAIDS renews its commitment to support governments to protect human rights and citizens to claim their rights in the context of HIV. And we call on governments to renew their commitment to realize the rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and to achieve the “universal” in “universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support”.

### Contact

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