

FACT SHEET

A HEALTH RIGHTS ADVOCACY FORUM (HERAF) PUBLICATION

Integrating Gender into HIV and AIDS Programmes in Kenya

What is gender integration and why it matters in HIV and AIDS Programming?

Gender Integration: ensures gender equality. Both women and men specific concerns are taken into consideration in the design and implementation of structures, processes, programming and financing of HIV responses to ensure that both women and men benefit equally. Gender integration focuses on the real needs of women and men. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the activity plans, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of these projects and interventions so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.

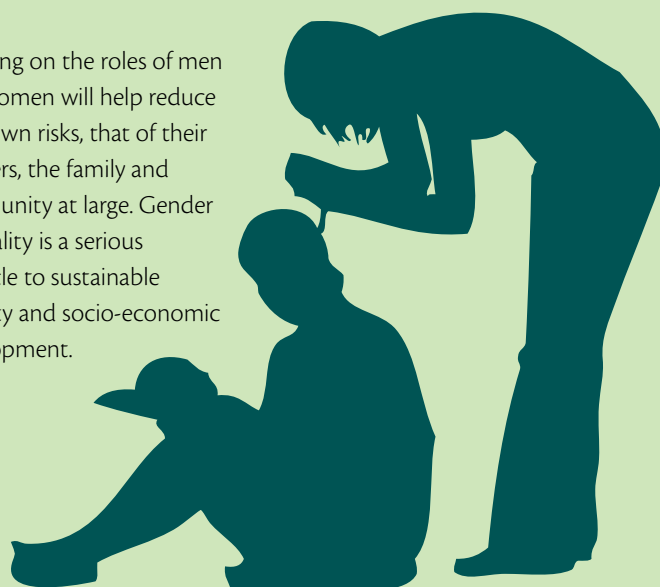
Facts of Gender and HIV Prevalence in Kenya

The KAIS 2007 estimated that HIV prevalence rate in Kenya among the general population aged 15-49 was at 7.4% while the KDHS put it at 6.3%. The Kenya Demographic Health Survey (2008/2009) indicates that the prevalence rate of women is higher than that of men. Women prevalence is at 8.4 % against men at 5.45%. The 2007 KAIS had found the prevalence of infected women was at 8% as compared to men at 4.3%. In the age bracket of the youth aged 15-24 years, the prevalence among women is shockingly high. Young women tend to have prevalence four times higher than that of young men with the rate of women at 5.6% against men at 1.4 % respectively (KAIS), and 4.5% and 1.1% respectively (KDHS). The latest new infection rate is at 44% for women engaged in heterosexual relationships.

Why Integrate Gender into HIV and AIDS Programmes?

HIV and AIDS pose unprecedented threat to human welfare and socio-economic development. Heterosexual transmission of HIV infection is affected by gender-based power relations and gender disparities exhibited in cultural norms and beliefs. Globally, the HIV epidemic is getting feminized, with Kenya recording higher infection rates for women and girls as compared to men and boys. The biological, physiological and socio-economical vulnerabilities of women to the infection are greater than for men. The feminization of HIV and AIDS calls for an integration approach that stresses on the needs for both men and women in programming interventions. Male participation will play a key role in ensuring that men become part of the solution.

Focusing on the roles of men and women will help reduce their own risks, that of their partners, the family and community at large. Gender inequality is a serious obstacle to sustainable poverty and socio-economic development.



This fact sheet frames Key advocacy issues in Gender and HIV and AIDS Programming based on our findings in a Gender Audit of existing policies in HIV programming in Kenya. This is a product of our project work; "Towards Gender Sensitive and Gender Transformative programming" with support from GIZ BACKUP Initiative.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This fact sheet is developed with financial and technical support from the German BACKUP Initiative and the GIZ Health Sector Programme in Kenya

HIV and AIDS interventions that address gender –based inequalities and risks can contribute to a sustainable responses to the epidemic. Violence against women and HIV and AIDS are mutually reinforcing and there is need for multi-pronged approaches that reinforce women’s human rights and gender as key strategies in combating HIV and AIDS.

Why integrate gender in HIV and AIDS Programmes: It will;

- ❖ Address the concerns of men, women boys and girls who are susceptible to HIV infection since they are all potentially exposed to the risks.
- ❖ Promote girls education and women literacy through increased access to education and training to enhance their capacity in decision making. There is evidence that educated women are more likely to protect themselves from contracting the HIV virus than the uneducated.
- ❖ Boost the capacity of women and girls who lack the power to confidently protect themselves from the risks and dangers, including the power to negotiate safe sex.
- ❖ Prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV will be considered an important intervention in the prevention and control of HIV and AIDS. It is noted that in Kenya the prevalence rate of HIV infection is high in women of reproductive age. Systems that are gender sensitive must put in place interventions to reduce the incidences of mother to child transmission.
- ❖ Prevent HIV and AIDS infections through safe sex practices and apply abstinence where possible. Women are as twice likely as men to contract HIV from a single act of unprotected sex and yet they remain dependent on male protection.
- ❖ HIV and AIDS have significantly increased the burden of care for women. Women’s vulnerability is evident in the decrease of production at the community level since the reproductive roles overtake the productive and community roles. There is need to improve community based care by focusing on women and girls.

- ❖ Girls often leave school to take care of the sick and the dying and also to take up the reproductive roles in terms of the home duties when the mothers are ailing or are dead.
- ❖ Women and young girls are occasionally forced into sex work due to poverty and therefore the need for them to be supported to deal with the situation to alleviate poverty and the disease.
- ❖ Ensure that women and men get equal access to care, treatment and support.
- ❖ Ensure that women’s rights are respected as rights in comparison to the men’s rights. In most cases, women rights are undermined by retrogressive cultural practices and general subordination principles that pity women against men. Women have a right over their own bodies and ought to make decisions on whom to have sexual relationships and to chose when to have babies and how to protect themselves from the HIV virus.



HIV and AIDS has significantly increased the burden of care for women. Women’s vulnerability is evident in the decrease of production at the community level since the reproductive roles overtake the productive and community roles.

Contact: