



For Immediate Release An Invitation for Media

3,482 Women Died of HIV/AIDS Today

Women and girls becoming a world-wide endangered species

Halifax, NS—AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia, Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health and the School of Health and Human Performance, Dalhousie University are joining together with many other organizations across Canada in launching a comprehensive Blueprint for Action on Women and HIV/AIDS on December 1, 2005.

The number of women living with HIV and AIDS has risen in each region of the world. Women now make up half of the approximately 40 million adults living with HIV/AIDS worldwide. Stephen Lewis, the United Nations Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa has said, "HIV/AIDS is the worst plague this world is facing; it wreaks havoc on women and girls... what we have here is the most ferocious assault ever made by a communicable disease on women's health".

There are a number of factors which account for the disproportionate impact of HIV/AIDS on women and girls both here in Canada as well as globally. Firstly, women and girls have increased physiological vulnerability to infection due to the structure of their reproductive tracts. But it is women's lower socio-economic status and power imbalances between men and women which also increase their vulnerability to infection. In Canada, owing to societal indifferences, the strategies for women's HIV prevention and education are insufficient and do not necessarily reflect women's lived realities. In the 15 - 24 year age group, women comprise 42.5 per cent of new infections in Canada and 62 per cent worldwide. Clearly, HIV/AIDS is a gender-based epidemic.

The *Blueprint for Action on Women and HIV/AIDS* calls for all levels of government to be involved in the provision of adequate funding, sustained prevention, care, treatment and support for women in Canada.

Location: Art Gallery of Nova Scotia; Grandville St., Halifax
Time: 10:30; refreshments will be served after
Document: Copies of document will be made available to media at the event

Those available for interview on the Blueprint document:

Dr. Jacquie Gahagan HIV/AIDS researcher: Dalhousie University
Maria Mac Intosh Program Coordinator: AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia
Erika Burger Gender and HIV/AIDS Program Officer: Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health

For more information or to arrange an interview, contact: Maria Mac Intosh 425-4882, ext. 227