



# Gender and HIV/AIDS Programme

PROMOTING A GENDER-BASED APPROACH TO HIV AND AIDS POLICIES, PROGRAMMES AND RESEARCH

## What is gender?

Gender is NOT the biological or sexual differences between men and women. It is the social and cultural construct of shared expectations and norms about appropriate male and female behaviour, characteristics, and roles.

### How gender affects us

- roles, status, norms, and values
- responsibilities, needs, and expectations
- sexual behaviour
- division of labour, power, and responsibilities
- distribution of resources and rewards

### Social determinants of health

A person's health is affected by more than just their biological makeup. In fact, other social issues have a huge influence on health such as:

- income status
- working conditions
- drugs
- unemployment
- social support
- transport policy
- lack of access to food or healthcare
- social or economic exclusion

## HIV/AIDS is a gender-based epidemic.

### Why are women and girls disproportionately affected by this disease?

- Increased physiological vulnerability to infection – the risk for women is four times higher than for men.
- Lower socio-economic status and systemic discrimination decreases accessibility to education and healthcare.
- Power imbalances between men and women can result in domestic violence, rape, and sexual abuse.
- Convergence of gender with culture, race and ethnicity, ability, family status, and sexual orientation creates different challenges for women and men.
- Limited participation for women in both public and domestic decision-making and discussion
- Displacement of families during conflict situations

*There are strong indications that the main risk factor for many women acquiring HIV is the often undisclosed risk behaviour of their male partners.*

# ON THE RISE . . . HIV infection in women around the world

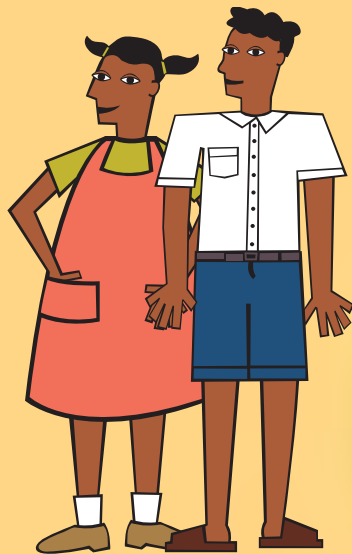
## Do the math...

**40 million:** It would take four straight years (without stopping) to shake the hand of everyone living with HIV and AIDS worldwide.

**5 million:** It would take 7.3 straight years to walk by every person who was infected with HIV worldwide in 2004.

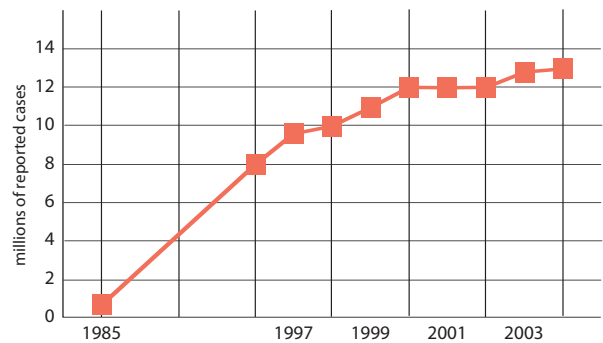
**3 million:** The number of people who died from AIDS in 2004 is equivalent to one in every three Canadians.

**14 million:** The number of orphans in sub-Saharan Africa – equivalent to every child in Canada and every child born for the next eighteen years losing both parents.

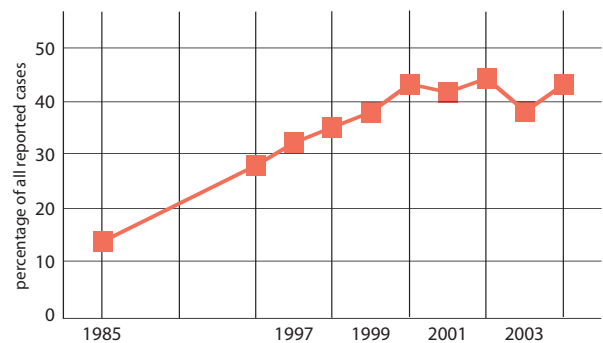


ILLUSTRATIONS: ELLEN PAPCIAK-ROSE

**Rising Rates of HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Women 1985–2003**



**Rising Rates of HIV/AIDS in Canadian Women 1985–2003**



*Today 50% of those infected globally are women. To stem the tide of the epidemic, the magnitude of this problem must be recognized and critical steps must be taken towards empowering women.*

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY SPECIAL SESSION ON HIV/AIDS



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