

The objectives of this session are

- To share innovative initiatives, practices and insights in responding to the HIV/AIDS epidemic
- To discuss and analyze challenges and critical issues from the perspective of gender and human rights
- To formulate processes to deepen knowledge, networking and strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders

Schedule

Date and Time : July 13th 2004, at 1600 to 1800 hrs.

Venue: UNAIDS Meeting Room No: 1 at the Conference Venue

1600 – 1610 hrs: Introduction to the Session

1610 – 1620 hrs: Key Remarks by Chair, Dr. Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director, UNIFEM.

1620 – 1630 hrs: Advocacy on the Gender and HIV/AIDS Code for Southern Africa: Ms. Marlise Richter, South Africa

1630 – 1640 hrs: Making Programmatic Responses Gender Sensitive: Ms. P. Kousalya, President Positive Women's Network, India

1640 – 1650 hrs: Women's Access to ARV in Thailand: Ms. Buarean Pimthong, Thailand

1650 – 1700 hrs: A Collaborative Effort of the Indian Railways and UNIFEM on Gender and HIV/AIDS – Dr. Aruna Kumari, Chief Medical Superintendent, Vijayawada Division, Indian Railways.

1700 – 1710 hrs: Breaking the Silence on the Linkages between HIV/AIDS, Gender and Resources : Ms. Mary Rusimbi, Tanzania

1710 – 1745 hrs: Interactive Discussions

1745 – 1800 hrs: Summarization

The United Nations Development Fund for Women was created by the UN General Assembly resolution in 1976, in response to the call from the women's movement. It was set up to be an aid to and advocate for women of the developing world-to give them voice and visibility. Serving as a bridge between global policy-makers and women in the developing world, UNIFEM forms linkages and bridges micro-voices to macro-policies.



Engendering Response to HIV/AIDS: Learning from the Field



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(Conceived and developed by UNIFEM South Asia)

Venue :
UNAIDS Meeting Room No.1
at the Conference Venue

UNIFEM Learning Session
July 13th 2004,
At XV International AIDS Conference
Bangkok, Thailand

Time: 1600 – 1800 hrs.



Ms. Noeleen Heyzer
Executive Director,
UNIFEM

“Ten years ago, women were at the periphery of the epidemic. Today, they are at its epicenter. For young women the situation is particularly alarming. The social impact of HIV/AIDS on women and girls is greater - they are the ones who assume the burden of care when family members are affected by the disease, putting severe constraints on their access to education, employment, food cultivation, and often treatment. Violence against women, both a cause and a consequence of the epidemic, adds another major risk factor for transmission. Rape, sexual violence and women's inability to refuse unwanted sex or to demand safe sex are serious factors in the spread of the epidemic.

To make a real difference, we have to transform words into action and results. This requires governments and the international community at large to stand by their commitments and to allocate resources to translate them into action. I call on the world community to pay close attention to what women are telling us about the situation they live in - their needs, hopes and visions of a better future. It is our responsibility to amplify their voices and to use them to guide our work and policies. Only then can we hope to achieve a world in which both men and women are able to lead the best lives they can.

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Meet the Panelists who will be focusing on some critical HIV/AIDS and gender-related issues



Marlise Richter, South Africa

An activist and advocate with research interests on diverse issues like HIV/AIDS and its engendered aspects, health as a human right, and gender-based violence. Marlise, a recipient of a Fulbright Scholarship, presently serves on the Steering Committee of the AIDS & Rights Alliance for Southern Africa, and works on the AIDS Law Project at the Centre for Applied Legal Studies, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa.

The panelist will share her experiences on how the 'Code on the Equality of Women and the reduction of risk of HIV infection' can be used as an instrument by the community, traditional leaders, civil society and others to design and implement gender-sensitive programs that will address issues related to women's vulnerabilities and prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa.

Kousalya Periasamy, India

Seven years ago, having taken the courageous step of disclosing her status, Kousalya founded the Positive Women's Network. (PWN+) in 1998. She is on the Board of a number of national/international networks of PLWHAs and has recently been awarded the McArthur Fellowship. PWN+ has done path breaking work in advocacy and leadership development of women living with HIV. PWN+ has also undertaken human rights research documentation with Centre for Advocacy and Research.



The panelist will focus on how programmatic responses can be made gender sensitive and translated on the ground in collaboration with state and non state agencies. She will share experiences of positive women in policy advocacy and programme implementation.

Buarean Pimthong, Thailand

Buarean has been working in the field of HIV/AIDS for the last 9 years. As a woman living with HIV/AIDS, she serves as a committee member of the North-East Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS in Thailand since 1999.

Buarean strongly wishes to help fellow people living with HIV/AIDS with information and access to the medical care, without discriminatory practices. Her current work includes strengthening relationship between PLWHA groups and hospitals, in cooperation with the government and private agencies and care for positive people. She is a team member of the research and data collection involving PLWHAs in North-Eastern Thai provinces.

The panelist will be speaking on the experiences of the Thai Women and AIDS Task Force on the astonishing ARV patent legal suit and increasing access to ARV treatment. The Thai Women and AIDS Task Force was formed in 2002 and is aimed at empowering women and creating a forum for collective action against HIV/AIDS with a women's and gender perspective.



Dr. M. Aruna Kumari, Chief Medical Superintendent, Indian Railways - A health specialist who has been instrumental in advocating for and implementing the first ever programme on free access to ARV treatment and care for the railway employees and their families.

The panelist will be sharing her experiences of how a public sector organization is undergoing intensive learning and establishing multidimensional gender sensitive counselling; economic, advocacy and educational programs, in a pilot initiative being undertaken with the Indian Railways.

Mary Rusimbi, Tanzania

Mary Rusimbi, Executive Director of Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP), has a background in community education, gender, research, policy analysis and advocacy. She has previously worked as a Gender Programme Officer for the Royal Netherlands Embassy and the Canadian High Commission. Mary has substantial experience in gender mainstreaming and participatory training and works with a range of key stakeholders, including CSOs/NGOs, governments, donors and members of Parliament. TGNP promotes activities with a pro-poor and gender perspective in influencing key policy and legal frameworks. She has been working in advancing the knowledge base of HIV/AIDS and the care economy in the region, especially the SADC region.



The panelist will present key issues from an ongoing national campaign - "BREAKING THE SILENCE ON THE LINKAGES BETWEEN HIV/AIDS, GENDER AND RESOURCES". She will highlight the rationale, objectives, processes and the impact of this campaign, with focus on how the care burden of HIV/AIDS falls disproportionately on poor communities, specially women.