



**UN AMICAALL
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Declaration on Violence Against Women and HIV

Alliance of Mayors and Municipal Leaders on HIV/AIDS in Africa

We, The Alliance of Mayors and Municipal Leaders on HIV/AIDS in Africa, meeting December 5th, 2007 in Pretoria, South Africa, on the occasion of our General Assembly, aware that violence against women is not only a gross violation of human rights but also a global health crisis of epidemic proportions and often a cause and consequence of HIV, have adopted the following declaration:

Recognising that all forms of violence against women increase their vulnerability to HIV whether this is through domestic violence; rape and sexual violence; trafficking, the sex trade, and other forms of commercial violence; or because they are victims of sexual coercion by male relatives, classmates or neighbours;

Aware that longstanding social and cultural norms often reinforce and fuel the acceptability of violence against women in society and in doing so, dramatically increase the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV, either directly through forced sex, or indirectly by constraining women's ability to negotiate the circumstances in which sex takes place, to abstain from sex, to get their partners to be faithful, or to use a condom;

Noting that violence, or fear of violence, prevents women from accessing vital HIV prevention, care and treatment services, or disclosing their status;

Recognising that in many cases these problems are exacerbated by fears of abandonment or eviction from homes and communities, particularly for women who lack economic means;

We hereby declare our commitment to address the links between violence against women and HIV and to respond effectively to these challenges within our communities by taking action as follows:

Support community-based training and information campaigns to change harmful norms and behaviours that perpetuate violence against women and reinforce its social acceptability;

Advocate for the development of an enabling national policy and legal framework;

Encourage open discussion with all sectors of the community about HIV and violence against women embracing men as partners and treating them as part of the solution;

Promote economic opportunities for women to give them the tools and economic independence they need to escape violence, and reduce their risk of HIV;

Provide the necessary support to ensure that HIV programs address the realities of violence against women as a barrier to HIV services by recognising the signs of violence, offering basic counselling and social support, and making appropriate referrals for additional assistance, including legal services, where available;

Promote national and community level action that improves the educational and legal standing of women and protects the sexual and reproductive rights of women including the right to decide when, with whom and under what circumstances to engage in sex;

Ensure the link between violence against women and HIV is effectively addressed within programmes and activities and encourage partnerships among groups working on violence against women and HIV.

The Alliance of Mayors and Municipal Leaders on HIV/AIDS in Africa is a network of local government authorities and mayors. Established in 1998, it was formed to promote an expanded, multi-sectoral response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic at the local level. The Alliance works in partnership with government, civil society organizations, the private sector and local communities. National chapters of the Alliance have been launched in thirteen countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. The Alliance Secretariat is located in Windhoek, Namibia.

AMICAALL (Alliance of Mayors' Initiative for Community Action on AIDS at the Local Level) is the strategy for translating the goals of the Alliance into concrete actions in countries.

The UN-AMICAALL Partnership Programme was established in April 2001 to support development of the Alliance and its country programmes.

For more information, go to the website: www.amicaall.org

