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## **Unitaid and Gender Equality**

### **Access to medicines for women and girls**

Unitaid's mission is to connect innovators who are developing better medicines and diagnostic tools with the people who most need them.

Gender equality is a human right, and a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Yet every day, gender-based exclusion, discrimination and violence deprive women and girls of equal access to healthcare.

#### **HIV/AIDS, the problem**

- Young women make up 10 percent of the population in eastern and southern Africa but account for 26 percent of new HIV infections.
- HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death worldwide for women of reproductive age. Almost 18 million women are living with HIV. It is a leading cause of death among adolescents in Africa.
- In 2016, an estimated 2.1 million children were living with HIV, 160,000 children were newly infected and 120,000 died of AIDS-related illness.

#### **Solutions**

Unitaid's investments expand access to healthcare for women and girls vulnerable to HIV/AIDS:

- Self-testing: Unitaid's investments are creating a sustainable market for HIV self-testing to bring a diagnosis to adolescent girls, sex workers, and others reluctant to go to a clinic for testing.
- Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP): People at high risk of contracting HIV, including women and girls, can prevent infection by taking antiretroviral drugs. Unitaid grantee Fiotec is working to create demand for the treatment and promote its use in vulnerable groups.
- Optimal antiretrovirals (ARVs): These HIV drugs have fewer side effects, lower risk of resistance, and are more affordable than current treatments. Unitaid grantees are producing evidence on their use and marketing. The drugs are seen as a way to extend access to ARVs to millions of women and girls.
- Paediatric HIV: A range of Unitaid-supported projects seek to eliminate HIV deaths in children. Grantee Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation is working to expand point-of-care Early Infant Diagnosis. Other grantees are developing medicines specifically for children.

## **Malaria, the problem**

- About half the world's population has been exposed to malaria.
- WHO estimates more than 400,000 people died of this preventable, curable disease in 2015.
- Emerging resistance to drugs and insecticides threatens to cancel out the gains made since 2000 in reducing malaria illness and death.
- Malaria kills a child once every two minutes. Those under five are particularly susceptible.
- Preventive treatment in pregnancy is highly effective but underused; every year, malaria infects more than 30 million pregnant women in sub-Saharan Africa and kills about 10,000 pregnant women and 200,000 newborns.

## **Solutions**

Unitaid investments are bringing the latest malaria treatments to vulnerable people.

- Intermittent Preventive Treatment in Pregnancy (IPTp): Unitaid grantee Jhpiego is using a community-based approach to expand malaria treatment for pregnant women.
- Next Generation Indoor Residual Spray: Grantee Innovative Vector Control Consortium is developing more affordable, long-lasting insecticides to kill malaria-carrying mosquitoes.

## **Tuberculosis (TB), the problem**

- In 2015, 500,000 women and 200,000 children died from TB. About 140,000 of the women and 40,000 of the children were HIV-positive.
- Almost 90 percent of HIV-associated TB deaths among women were in Africa. TB in pregnant women living with HIV triples the risk of maternal and infant mortality.
- A lack of tools and approaches limits effective TB screening, diagnosis and treatment. The problem is most acute for multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB).

## **Solutions**

Unitaid is finalizing a number of grant packages that will fight TB by:

- Scaling up tuberculosis diagnosis and treatment for children.
- Bringing preventive therapy for TB to more people, particularly to high risk groups such as children, HIV-positive women and pregnant women.

## **Next steps**

In the coming months, Unitaid will solicit projects that can break down the walls between treatment programs for people who suffer from multiple, interconnected illnesses. The new projects will be designed to make access to healthcare more fair for women and girls.

- Advanced disease: Unitaid is stepping up the fight against the opportunistic infections that kill those with advanced HIV disease—including women and girls. One in 10 HIV-positive people have advanced disease, putting them at high risk of death.
- Human Papillomavirus and cervical cancer: Women co-infected with HIV and HPV are five times more likely to develop cervical cancer. Unitaid will be supporting work to develop a one-stop “screen & treat” strategy for them.
- Hepatitis C virus, hepatitis B virus: Unitaid aims to expand access to screening and treatment programs for these deadly but curable liver diseases. Unitaid will also support the development of affordable medicines that are pan-genotypic, meaning they work against multiple types of HCV.