

EDUCATION KEY TO ADDRESSING HIV

SAFE SCHOOLS
EVERY GIRL'S
RIGHT

Schools are places for children to learn and grow. But many girls all over the world go to school fearing for their safety, dreading humiliating and violent treatment, simply hoping to get through another day.

Schools reflect wider society. The same forms of violence which women suffer throughout their lives – physical, sexual and psychological – are present in the lives of many girls in and around their schools.

Every day, girls are assaulted on their way to school, pushed and hit in school grounds, teased and insulted by their classmates, humiliated by having rumours about them circulated through whisper campaigns, mobile phones or the Internet. Some are threatened with sexual assault by other students, offered higher marks by teachers in exchange for sexual favours, even raped in the staff room. Some are caned or beaten in school in the name of discipline.

In countries racked by war, some girls are seized by armed groups, and some are injured or killed on their journey to school or when schools are attacked. Sexual abuse and exploitation are particular problems for girls living in refugee or displaced people's camps.

Violence against girls takes place in and around many educational institutions all over the world. It is inflicted not only by teachers, but also by administrators, other school employees, fellow students and outsiders. The result is that countless girls are kept out of school, drop out of school, or do not fully participate in school.

HIV, AIDS AND EDUCATION

Education is a vital element in efforts to stop the spread of HIV and AIDS. The Global Campaign for Education has estimated that universal primary education would prevent 700,000 new cases of HIV each year.

Every human being is entitled to the highest attainable standard of health, a right that includes the right to health education and information. Not only are schools a place

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EVERY GIRL HAS A
RIGHT TO EDUCATION
IN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT



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A young woman who escaped when a man tried to grab her on her way home from school is describing her experience to girls at a school in Naivasha, Kenya. Three years earlier, a non-governmental organization, Dolphin Anti-Rape And Aids Control Outreach, had visited her school, teaching girls how to defend themselves against rape.

where health information can be provided to children and adolescents, but education enables people to understand and act on the health information they receive.

When violence against girls in schools leads to them dropping out or not participating in school, it prevents them from acquiring an education that would decrease their vulnerability to HIV infection.

In addition, sexual assault against girls in or around schools carries the danger of HIV infection. The threat of violence reduces the ability of girls to protect themselves from infection. Forced sexual activity and intercourse for young girls can also cause numerous reproductive health complications.

Girls living with HIV may be excluded from school, or may face stigma, harassment and assault within school. Many girls are taken out of school to care for sick family members.

During armed conflicts, many girls are deprived of education as well as suffering other human rights abuses. Some are forcibly recruited in order to provide sexual services to combatants. Widespread sexual violence against women and girls, followed by very high rates of HIV infection, has been seen in many recent wars.

URGENT ACTION NEEDED

Amnesty International recognizes the determination of girls all over the world to gain an education. We demand that states take immediate action to fulfil their international commitments and make schools accessible to girls and safe. Amnesty International calls on governments and schools to:

- Prohibit all forms of violence against girls in schools.
- Provide appropriate treatment and support services for victims and survivors of school-related violence, including HIV/AIDS information, medication and counselling services.
- Develop and implement policies and programmes to include and reintegrate girls living with HIV, pregnant or married girls in schools.

**STOP VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN**
**AMNESTY
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November 2007
AI Index: ACT 77/013/2007
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We research, campaign, advocate and mobilize to end abuses of human rights – civil, political, social, cultural and economic. From freedom of expression and association to physical and mental integrity, from protection from discrimination to the right to shelter – these rights are indivisible.

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