



MOMENTS THAT DEFINE US...



#MoreNowThanEver 

#InternationalWomensDay #IWD2026

#ForAllWomenAndGirls

Health, Equality and Justice for All Women and Girls!

On 8 March 2026, as the world marks International Women's Day under the theme "Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls," we stand with communities and civil society across Asia Pacific and globally to demand sustained action to protect the health, dignity and rights of women and girls in all their diversity.

Despite scientific breakthroughs, HIV, tuberculosis (TB), malaria, and other preventable diseases such as cervical cancer continue to reflect deep structural injustice. Women and girls remain disproportionately affected. Globally, **21 million women are living with HIV**¹, including 2.2 million in Asia Pacific². HIV transmission rates among adolescent girls and young women were four times higher than global targets³. In 2024, **3.7 million women developed TB**, one of the leading infectious killers of women in low- and lower-middle-income countries (LICs and LMICs). That same year, more than **36% of pregnant women in high-burden countries were exposed to malaria**⁴, placing both mothers and newborns at grave risk.

At the same time, cervical cancer – caused by persistent infection with the human papillomavirus (HPV) – remains one of the most preventable yet deadly cancers for women in LICs and LMICs. Women living with HIV are up to six times more likely to develop cervical cancer, yet access to regular screening, early treatment, HPV vaccination, and long-term monitoring remains severely inadequate in many Asia-Pacific countries.

These inequities are not biological inevitabilities. They stem from discriminatory laws, economic marginalisation, gender-based violence, stigma, and barriers to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services - particularly for adolescent girls, women living with HIV, sex workers, transgender women, women who use drugs, incarcerated women, and women living with disabilities. At the current pace, it will take 123 years to close the global gender gap⁵. Without accelerated investment, preventable infections and preventable cancers will continue to cost women and girls their lives.

"Women and girls in all their diversity, including those from marginalised communities, have the right to live healthy, dignified lives free from infectious diseases and the structural inequalities that continue to limit their access to care, safety and opportunity," said Anushiya Karunanithy, Head of International Relation and Special Initiative Department, Malaysian AIDS Council. "Achieving gender equality is fundamental to ending infectious diseases. When we invest in inclusive, gender-transformative health responses that centre the voices and leadership of women and girls – including transgender women and gender-diverse communities – we strengthen health systems, protect human rights and ensure that no one is left behind."

The Global Fund's Critical Role for Women and Girls

For more than two decades, [the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria](#) (Global Fund) has been the largest multilateral financier of HIV, TB and malaria programmes in LICs and LMICs. Increasingly, it has also supported integrated approaches that strengthen broader sexual and reproductive health systems - including cervical cancer prevention and care.

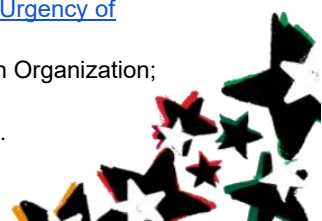
¹ [Information sheet HIV statistics, globally and by WHO region, 2025](#)

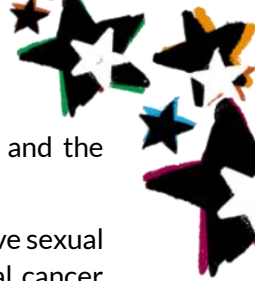
² [Asia Pacific women living with HIV speak out about rights violations | UNAIDS](#). Accessed: 26 February 2026.

³ [HIV and adolescent girls and young women — Thematic briefing note — 2024 global AIDS update The Urgency of Now: AIDS at a Crossroads | UNAIDS](#)

⁴ [World Malaria Report 2025: Addressing the threat of antimalarial drug resistance](#). Geneva: World Health Organization; 2025. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

⁵ [Key Findings - Global Gender Gap Report 2025 | World Economic Forum](#). Accessed: 26 February 2026.





Through its 2023-2028 Strategy⁶, The Global Fund prioritises health equity, gender equality and the removal of structural barriers to care. Its investments include:

- **Removing human rights and gender-related barriers to care and** expanding comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services - including integration of HPV vaccination and cervical cancer prevention, screening and treatment within HIV programmes.
- **Strengthening gender-responsive data and accountability systems**, using age- and sex-disaggregated data to identify inequities and inform targeted action.
- **Financing community- and women-led organisations** to address stigma, discrimination and structural barriers to HIV, TB and malaria services, such as via the [Gender Equality Fund](#) and [Breaking Down Barriers](#) initiative.
- **Scaling up HIV prevention and testing for adolescent girls and young women**, contributing to a 51% reduction in new HIV infections in high-burden countries between 2010-2030.
- **Supporting prevention of sexual and gender-based violence**, including post-violence care and access to justice in humanitarian emergencies and crisis settings including armed conflict, natural disasters, displacement, and climate-related crises.

These integrated investments demonstrate that gender-responsive health systems save lives, and that eliminating cervical cancer, for example, is achievable when HIV, HPV vaccination, screening and treatment services are coordinated and adequately financed.

“The Eighth Replenishment outcome of US\$12.64 billion falls 30% short of the Global Fund’s US\$18 billion minimum target, seriously jeopardising essential health programming for millions of women and girls affected by HIV, TB and malaria,” said Sita Shahi, Regional Coordinator of the International Community of Women Living with HIV Asia Pacific (ICWAP). “We can end the injustices and inequalities caused by these devastating diseases in our lifetimes, but only if we recommit to collective investment and action! We must empower communities at the heart of the fight, including women and girls in all their diversity, to continue expanding access to rights-based, gender transformative health services for all.”

We call on global leaders, donors and duty bearers to work meaningfully with communities and civil society to:

1. **Reform discriminatory laws, policies and practices – and enact and enforce legal protections** – to uphold the rights, dignity and bodily autonomy of women and girls in all their diversity, and accelerate progress toward full gender equality.
2. **Invest in and strengthen women-led and community-based organisations** to deliver equitable, rights-based and gender-transformative health responses tailored to the needs of women and girls in all their diversity.
3. **Accelerate the elimination of cervical cancer** by expanding HPV vaccination, scaling up quality-assured screening and early treatment services, and strengthening long-term monitoring systems - with prioritised access for women living with HIV and other underserved populations.
4. **Scale up investment in research, diagnosis, and treatment for neglected diseases affecting women and girls**, including Female Genital Schistosomiasis, by integrating comprehensive screening and care into HIV, malaria, and broader sexual and reproductive health services, and ensuring sustained financing for gender-responsive innovation and service delivery.
5. **Increase and convert commitments to the Global Fund’s Eighth Replenishment** to sustain and scale up lifesaving HIV, TB and malaria programmes, strengthen integrated sexual and reproductive health services, and safeguard progress toward UHC2030 and Sustainable Development Goals 3, 5 and 10.

⁶ [2023–2028 Strategy: Fighting Pandemics and Building a Healthier and More Equitable World](#). The Global Fund.

