



The United Nations agency leading the response to the AIDS epidemic is calling for an end to gender-based violence, which is not only a serious human rights violation but also increases the risk of HIV infection.

Recent research has established a clear association between intimate partner violence and HIV, with women experiencing such violence facing a 50 per cent increased risk of acquiring the virus, according to the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

"Every hour 50 young women become newly infected with HIV," UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé said in a message ahead of Monday's International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

"Women and girls have the right to live [free of violence](#) and inequities and to protect themselves against HIV," he said.

About one in three women globally experience physical and/or sexual violence by a partner or sexual violence by a non-partner, the UN World Health Organization (WHO) has said.

Around 150 million girls under the age of 18 have experienced some form of sexual violence, according to agency, with many never disclosing their traumatic experience.

Responding to gender-based violence and HIV is "a matter of shared global responsibility for social justice," UNAIDS said in its news release.

In the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS, UN Member States pledged to eliminate gender inequalities, gender-based abuse and violence, and to protect women from the risk of HIV infection.

Yet gender-based violence is a pervasive reality across the globe, noted UNAIDS. It affects women and men around the world. In particular, women who inject drugs, female sex workers and transgender people are most affected.