On 1 December 2012, FIGO reaffirms its commitment to highlighting World AIDS Day, an international day raising awareness about HIV and AIDS globally.

World AIDS Day has become one of the most recognised international health days in the global calendar and presents opportunities to raise awareness, remember those who have died, and celebrate achievements, such as increased access to treatment and prevention services.


What is HIV/AIDS?

- HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus

- HIV causes AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) by damaging the immune system cells until the system can no longer fight off infections it would normally prevent

- It can be several years before HIV has damaged the immune system enough for AIDS to develop
The numbers affected

The latest statistics of the global HIV and AIDS epidemic were published by UNAIDS, WHO and UNICEF in November 2011, and refer to the end of 2010:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People living with HIV/AIDS in 2010</td>
<td>34 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of adults living with HIV/AIDS in 2010 who were women (%)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children living with HIV/AIDS in 2010</td>
<td>3.4 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People newly infected with HIV in 2010</td>
<td>2.7 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children newly infected with HIV in 2010</td>
<td>390,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDS deaths in 2010</td>
<td>1.8 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

http://www.avert.org/worldstats.htm

Professor Sir Sabaratnam Arulkumaran, FIGO President, said: ‘With HIV and AIDS affecting women to such a significant degree [the proportion of adults living with HIV/AIDS in 2010 who were women is estimated at 50 per cent], it is essential that we continue to work towards alleviating this terrible epidemic.

‘Women’s standing in society with respect to HIV infection is an especially vulnerable one - biologically, they are more likely to become infected by HIV through unprotected heterosexual intercourse than men, less likely to negotiate condom use, and more likely to experience non-consensual sexual relations.

‘FIGO’s work with adolescent sexual and reproductive health, in particular, also highlights other important issues connected to HIV - for example, we know that HIV testing is rare among adolescents, despite the knowledge available. It is essential for young women to have the means to protect themselves, for example, protection from gender-based violence, access to condoms and treatment for STIs etc.’
He added: ‘Women also have to contend with issues surrounding mother-to-child transmission of HIV - many do not have adequate access to drugs to lessen the chances of their unborn children contracting HIV.

‘FIGO’s goals on this issue are, among others, to promote condom-use as a necessary preventative measure; to educate and support HIV-positive new mothers in the area of “replacement-feeding”; to focus on PMTCT (Prevention of Mother-To-Child Transmission); to improve access to anti-retroviral drugs; and to promote women-centred healthcare.

‘More generally, FIGO works to help end gender-based violence and the stigma of HIV and HIV-testing through improving education, both in and out of schools, and to help encourage women’s financial independence.’

He ended: ‘FIGO looks forward to working with other global organisations to help achieve these goals, most specifically with UNAIDS - the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS - with whom we will be promoting several important measures, including the protection of patient rights and ensuring the protection of the rights of women living with HIV regarding access to their services in the health sector.’

Sources:
http://www.avert.org/worldstats.htm
http://www.avert.org/women-hiv-aids.htm