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Aids is now leading women’s killers

By PAUL REOFERN in London

A new report by the Londonbased

Panos Institute says

that aids is now the leading

'cause . of death for women

.aged 20-40 in some of the biggest cities in the Americans,

western Europe and sub-Saharan Africa., '

, The report entitled *Triptt*

*jeopardy: women' ,and Aids* was

compiled by Judith Mariasy who said:, “Aids will be a major health

hazard to women ‘worldwide over

the coming decades unless their

specific. needs are addressed

.through appropriate research,

health care and prevention

campaigns."

'''Women with little social or

economic power' face particular

risks of HIV infection, according

to the report which was published

to -"coincide with world aids' day

on December 1.

In the United States" a disproportionate number of black and

Latin women in poor urban communities are affected

In developing countries, lack of

access ,to basic resources like

condoms and inadequate information

on safer sex options compound the risks.

In Africa half the continent estimated five million HIV positive people are women and it

many sub-Saharan African countries the numbers of young women getting the disease are rising

faster than' men,

, 1f the report says that cultural

constraints affect sexual

behavior and poverty can Of tell

.mean that women are unable t<;

change their behavior even if

ware of the risks.

A poor prostitute's refusal to .

have sex with a man who won't

wear a condom can mean she will

, not make a living that day..

.Alarmingly, the report says

that up to -50 per cene of HIV

positive women pass on the virus

to their baby before or during

birth and during the 19808 more

than 550,000 infants world-wide

were born HIV infected. Approximately

90 per cent of these were

in sub-Saharan \_Africa.

Between 1\1!l9 and 1992 the

number of women..and children

infected With HIV in sub-Saba-

.ran Africa is expected to double.

. The report highlights "triple,

jeopardy'" when-HIV/Aid threatens

women in three main ways -

as individuals infected' themselves,

as careers and as mothers.

Caring for people with Aids is

Overwhelmingly carried out by

women and the emotional demands

are huge - not least because

of the stigma attached to

the disease the reporter says.

Dr Eka Williams, a Nigerian

who was present at the launch of

the report on Tuesday, is secretary-

general of the Society for

Women and ·Aids in Africa

(SWAA). The society was started

in 1988 and now has 21 branches

across the continent. It provided

the impetus for the report