



**INTERNATIONAL  
YEAR OF  
YOUTH**  
AUGUST 2010-2011  
OUR YEAR OUR VOICE

## *Dialogue and Mutual Understanding*

### **Fact Sheet: HIV and Young People**

- In 2008, young people accounted for 40 per cent of all new global HIV infections in people aged 15 years and older.
- Among young people living with HIV, 4 million (80%) live in sub-Saharan Africa, of whom 70% are female.
- The Southern and South-Eastern Asian Regions have the second highest HIV burden, with an estimated 3.8 million people living with HIV. Of the 280,000 people newly infected in this region in 2008, almost one-third were young people 15-24 years old.
- Infection rate among young people has decreased from 45% to 40% of all new infections in previous years.
- HIV prevalence trends (1990-2008) in 16 countries show decline among young people 15-24 years and decline of 25 percent or more in 15 out of 21 countries most affected by HIV.
- HIV prevalence among young women attending antenatal clinics is declining in some countries in Africa.

The AIDS epidemic poses one of the most formidable challenges to the world at large. In 2008, young people accounted for 40 per cent of all new HIV infections in people aged 15 years and older. Of the 33.4 million people living with HIV around the world, 4.9 million are between the ages of 15 and 24.

Experience over the past decade has demonstrated how to address HIV among young people. In countries with concentrated epidemics, programmes and resources must focus on youth who engage in risky behaviours, including injecting drugs, selling sex and men having sex with men.

In countries with generalised epidemics, where the general population is at risk, all vulnerable young people, particularly young women, need to be targeted. Evidence shows that sex education helps in containing the spread of HIV by delaying the onset of sexual activity and encouraging safer sexual behaviour.

### **The United Nations and the fight against HIV/AIDS**

The importance of preventing HIV infections among young people has been a consistent message in all HIV-related commitments, especially those made by Member States at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, the 1995 World Conference on Women and the 2001 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS.

The Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS adopted by the Special Session is particularly significant as it sets essential actions to significantly reduce HIV infections among young people. In the most recent 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, world leaders unanimously endorse the goal of achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support for all, including young people.





The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) brings together the efforts and resources of ten UN system organizations and the UNAIDS Secretariat to help prevent new HIV infections, care for people living with HIV and mitigate the impact of the epidemic. Specialized technical assistance on HIV to countries is provided through the UNAIDS Technical Division of Labour.

The UNAIDS Secretariat focuses on strategic information, the Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization focuses on sex education in educational institutions, the UN Population Fund coordinates issues surrounding out-of-school young people, UNICEF centers on adolescent development and social protection, the International Labour Organization concentrates on labour policies and workplace programmes and the World Health Organization mainly focuses on health sector and its responses.

HIV prevention among young people is one of eleven “Essential Programmatic Actions for HIV Prevention” in the UNAIDS policy position paper *Intensifying HIV prevention*.

As one of its ten priority areas, the UNAIDS *Joint Action for Results: Outcome Framework 2009 – 2011* aims to empower young people to protect themselves from HIV, providing a road map towards achieving the sixth Millennium Development Goal of reducing new HIV infections among young people.

## Progress

The commitments and actions by all stakeholders have facilitated progress in the HIV response among young people. The rate of new infections among young people has decreased from 45 to 40 per cent from previous years. Additionally, sex education has led to a delayed onset of sexual activity and increased the use of condoms in most of the sub-Saharan African countries that have shown a decrease in HIV prevalence among young people (UNESCO 2009). Trend data from 2000 to 2007 confirms declines in HIV prevalence among young women attending antenatal clinics in 14 of 17 selected African countries.

Out of 45 countries with survey-based trend data, 17 are starting to show a steady increase in HIV prevention knowledge among young women. Several high prevalence countries are also showing stabilization of their HIV epidemic with notable behavioural changes among young people in terms of age at onset of sex, multiple partners, and condom use.

Many challenges still persist in translating lessons learned into practice. Linkages between HIV and sexual and reproductive health services need to be strengthened. Programmes and financial resources continue to target young people with low risk of HIV infection instead of focusing on those most-at-risk.

Accurate and comprehensive knowledge about HIV is still not prevalent among young people and investment in education is needed. Inadequate coordination between different national stakeholders, such as Government ministries and civil society organizations, continue to hinder a coordinated, comprehensive HIV programme for young people.

Furthermore, young people still need more opportunities for meaningful engagement in advocacy and decision making.

## The way forward

To be effective, youth-led organizations should be involved at all stages of development, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes at the national, regional and global levels.





Representatives of youth organisations, especially from networks of young people living with HIV, should participate at the Board of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria as well as the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board.

With adequate capacity building and the creation of institutional spaces for participation, young people can make great contributions to the effectiveness of policies and programmes. With support from regional and global networks, youth-led organizations and networks of young people living with HIV can also mobilize youth movements to demand services.

Youth-led and youth-serving organizations should have a clear role in implementing national HIV responses.

It is essential to ensure an HIV free new generation through successful implementation of the following evidence-informed prevention strategies: youth-specific HIV and sexuality education; mass media interventions; youth-friendly rights-based sexual and reproductive health services, including use of condoms, and male circumcision. We must also reduce the risks of unsafe drug use and provide drug dependence treatment for young injecting drug users.

The UNAIDS Outcome Framework priority area on young people aims to reduce new HIV infections among young people by 30 per cent by 2015. It recommends three bold results that by 2011 must be achieved in at least 9 of the 17 countries that have largest number of young people living with HIV:

- Ensure at least 80% of young people in and out school have comprehensive knowledge of HIV.
- Double young people's use of condoms during their last sexual intercourse.
- Double young people's use of HIV testing and counselling services.

### For further information

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- Technical Guidance Note for the Global Fund applications : HIV Prevention -Young People and HIV: <http://www.who.int/hiv/pub/toolkits/GF-Resourcekit/en/index4.html>
- UNAIDS Inter-agency Task Team on HIV and Young People (IATT Young People) <http://www.unfpa.org/hiv/iatt>.
- UNAIDS Inter-agency Task Team on Education (IATT education) [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=33740&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=33740&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)
- UNAIDS Outcome Framework 2009-11

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