

CROWD OUT AIDS

**STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR COLLABORATING WITH A
NEW GENERATION OF LEADERS
FOR THE AIDS RESPONSE**

Submitted to the UNAIDS Secretariat
by the Drafting Committee of the youth-led
CrowdOutAIDS initiative

CROWD OUT AIDS

CrowdOutAIDS is the UNAIDS Secretariat's new youth-led policy project. It used social media tools and crowdsourcing technology to enable young people from around the world to develop a set of recommendations for the UNAIDS Secretariat to work more effectively with young people in the AIDS response.

These recommendations, together with an internal organizational assessment on HIV and young people, will inform the UNAIDS Secretariat's New Generation Leadership Strategy. CrowdOutAIDS is the first ever crowdsourced strategy document in the history of the United Nations.

Although these recommendations are for the Secretariat, it is hoped that they will pave the way for similar dialogue with UNAIDS Cosponsors¹ in engaging with young people on AIDS issues.

¹ | UNAIDS brings together the resources of the UNAIDS Secretariat and United Nations organizations to make coordinated and accountable efforts to respond to AIDS (1).



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In the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in June 2011 (2), world leaders set bold new targets for the AIDS response to be reached by 2015. These include reducing sexual transmission of HIV by 50%, providing treatment for 15 million people living with HIV, and eliminating stigma and discrimination against people living with and affected by HIV.

Although significant progress has been made during the past 30 years, there are still more than 3000 young people (aged 15–24) newly infected with HIV each day. According to UNAIDS estimates, young people accounted for 42% of all new HIV infections among adults (aged 15–49) in 2010. Only 24% of young women and 36% of young men in low- and middle-income countries responded correctly when asked five questions on HIV prevention and misconceptions around HIV transmission (3).

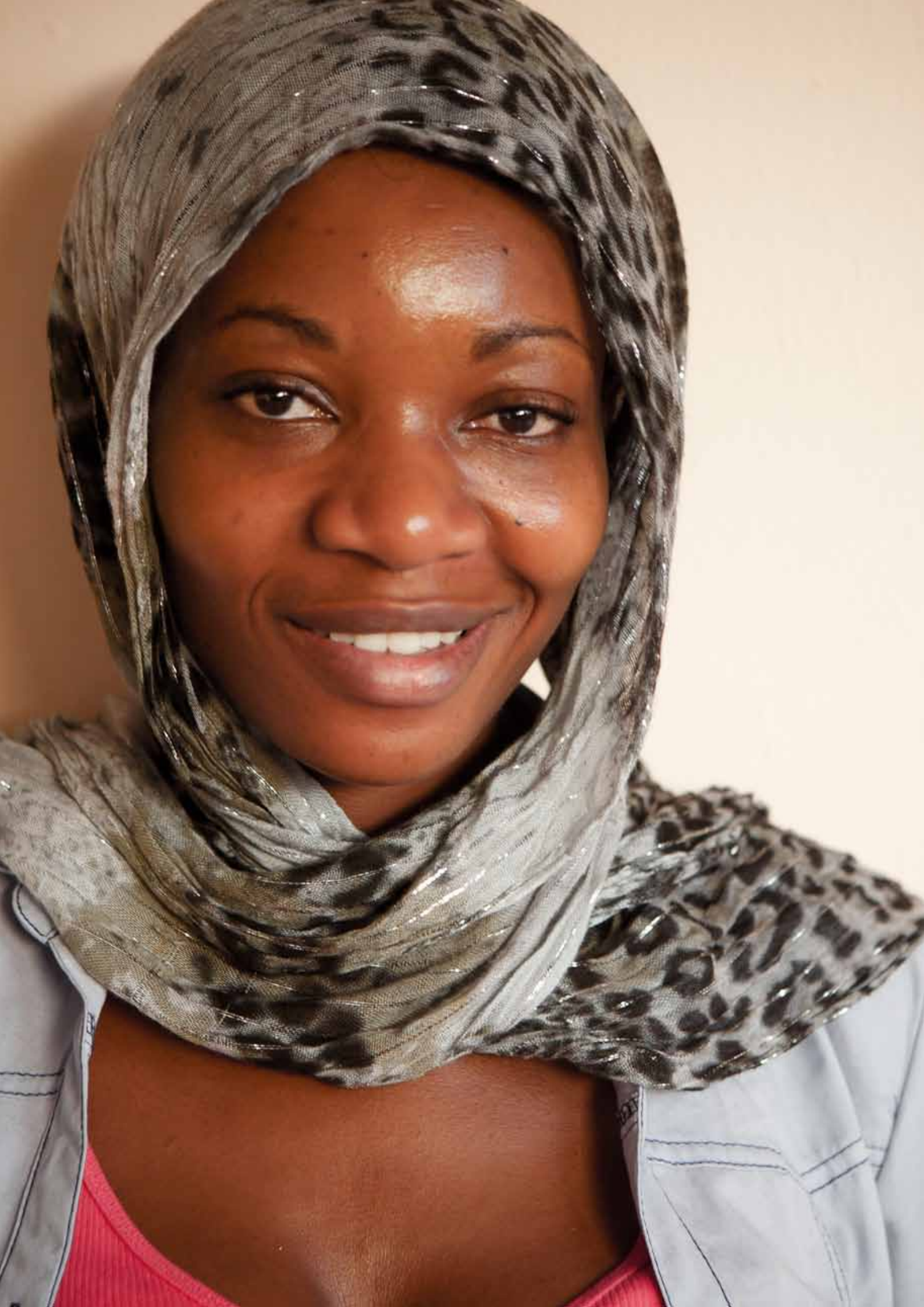
Five million young people worldwide are estimated to be living with HIV today. Many who are eligible for treatment lack access or do not even know their status. A generation of young people born with HIV is growing up with specific sexual and reproductive health needs that are largely ignored.

In the 2011 Political Declaration on AIDS, UN Member States expressed grave concern that young people still have limited access to high-quality education, decent employment, and sexual and reproductive health programmes that provide age-appropriate information, skills, services, and commodities for HIV prevention.

Across the world, new and exciting patterns of social organization are emerging. Informal networks and communities of interest have begun to exert influence in the political arena with clear demands for social justice. A new wave of community mobilization and political advocacy, led by young people, must be organized to scale up the demand and supply of evidence-informed HIV services for all young people regardless of HIV status, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

Young people are ready to take on this responsibility.







This document provides a set of recommendations for strategic actions that the UNAIDS Secretariat should undertake to collaborate effectively with a new generation of young leaders to ensure that the ambitious goals set by world leaders for the AIDS response are reached by 2015.

The recommendations were compiled by an independent, youth-led Drafting Committee, in dialogue with the UNAIDS Secretariat, on behalf of more than 5000 young people who took part in CrowdOutAIDS. This document represents the first crowdsourced strategy in the history of the UN. Launched online in October 2011, CrowdOutAIDS had four phases:

1 | Connect. Youth organizations, networks, and individuals across the world were contacted and an open 'crowdmapping' application was launched on crowdoutaids.org where organizations and individuals could sign up and take part. Social media buzz was created to spread the word about the project.

2 | Share. Eight youth-moderated online Open Forums were hosted in seven languages on Facebook and Renren with more than 3500 participants, and 40 youth-led Open Forums were hosted at the community level worldwide, with more than 1600 participants to enable young people to share their experiences and perspectives.

5

3 | Find Solutions. An online question-and-answer application generated 220 ideas for action in response to a set of thematic questions arising from the Open Forum discussions. Ideas were voted up or down by participants. Popular ideas, along with suggestions from the Open Forums, make up the key actions recommended in this document.

4 | Collective Action. An independent, youth-led 10-member Drafting Committee drafted this document via a public Google Docs application. The Committee engaged in constant dialogue with the UNAIDS Secretariat and received regular feedback from young people. The open document format and live drafting discussions allowed for continual inputs in shaping the text.

The drafting process concluded in March 2012 after a final 48-hour online dialogue involving the Drafting Committee, young people, and UNAIDS Secretariat staff.

2 | Crowdsourcing is a distributed problem-solving and production model. Problems are broadcast to an unknown group of solvers in the form of an open call for solutions. Users – also known as the crowd – submit solutions (4).

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PRIORITIES IN THE AIDS RESPONSE

Through the discussions in the Open Forums, young people identified three clear thematic priorities that span country borders:

1 | Dispel taboos surrounding sex and sexuality at the family and community levels, including in arenas such as schools, to ensure young people can gain access to information about their sexual and reproductive health and make informed decisions about their lives.

2 | Eliminate stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV and dispel myths about HIV and AIDS.

3 | Remove social and legal barriers that prevent young people, in particular young people among key populations at higher risk³, from accessing HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support services.

³ | Key populations at higher risk of HIV exposure and transmission are groups of people who are more likely to be exposed to HIV or to transmit it and whose engagement is critical to a successful HIV response. In all countries, key populations at higher risk include people living with HIV. In most settings, men who have sex with men, transgender people, people who inject drugs and sex workers and their clients are at higher risk of exposure to HIV than other groups (5).

A platform for collaboration with young people

Technology & Innovation



EXCITE INTEREST



**DEMOCRATIZE ACCESS TO
INFORMATION**



ENABLE CO-CREATION



REDUCE DUPLICATION



**PROMOTE
INTERCONNECTEDNESS**

An online space that maximizes the potential for young people's participation and leadership should be created to serve as the hub for all UNAIDS youth-related activities.

The online platform should:

excite interest with attention-arresting tools to inspire involvement from young people previously not engaged in the AIDS response;

democratize access to information and influence to allow more young people to benefit from opportunities available;

enable co-creation through open collaboration and horizontal conversations;

reduce duplication by making youth initiatives visible in the AIDS response;

promote interconnectedness to increase knowledge and experience sharing among young people across the world.

Barriers to youth engagement and leadership in the AIDS response: key findings

In the *Share* phase of CrowdOutAIDS, participants discussed the most pressing issues facing young people and debated ways to increase youth engagement and leadership in the AIDS response.

This section focuses on the main challenges identified—social and institutional—that hamper young people’s inclusion and effective leadership, while recognizing that significant progress has been made in involving young people and in delivering HIV services for young people during the past two decades.

The social position of young people is often described as subordinate to elders, making youth leadership difficult. Family relations that do not promote the active participation of young people in society are seen as problematic.

The attitudes and approaches of established policy- and decision-makers, including government and UN representatives, act as barriers to young people’s participation. There is little room for youth voices in broader public debates and youth perspectives and concerns are not taken seriously.

There is a gender dimension to youth leadership, with young men often expressing apprehension when being led by young women in youth initiatives.

The lack of social acceptance of young people living with HIV and key populations at higher risk and the social stigma attached to young people who join HIV awareness efforts prevent young people from getting involved.

Institutional barriers to youth participation include the lack of clear guidance and limited access to political spaces and opportunities to influence decision-making, as well as the lack of spaces for youth organizations and networks to establish partnerships with decision-makers at the country level, both with the UN and other partners.

There is a lack of representativeness and diversity of young people who are given opportunities to participate. Grassroots perspectives are seldom represented.

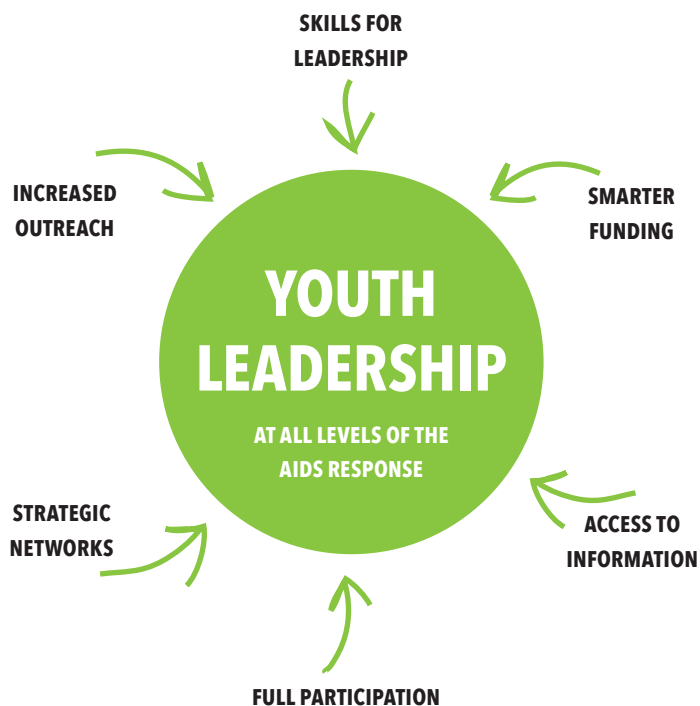
Official channels of participation offer opportunities to only a small number of young people instead of striving for broad-based inclusion. Although youth initiatives often look good on paper, the reality of youth leadership is determined by ‘whom you know’ (your network and connections) instead of ‘what you know’ (your skills and experiences). This also affects who gains access to funding for youth-led projects.

The tokenistic involvement of young people is particularly detrimental, where projects are “hijacked” by adults at various stages of development or after they are completed. This seriously de-motivates young people from engaging with governments and the UN and adds to a general lack of trust in these institutions.

The perceived lack of general knowledge about HIV among young people, insufficient data on HIV and young people in the local and national contexts, and a lack of interest on the part of young people in getting involved (i.e., a sense of AIDS fatigue) are all barriers to young people’s participation in the response. Furthermore, the negative tone of HIV awareness and prevention efforts runs counter to the curiosity, creativity, and experimentation of young people.

Young people have a strong desire to be part of positive change in their communities, but opportunities are limited for youth who do not have formal qualifications and established experience.

The time is now: an opportunity for youth leadership



Active youth leadership in the AIDS response will ensure that policy, programming, and funding decisions are closely aligned to young people's realities, making outcomes more effective. It will enable young people to claim their human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights; to demand access to HIV services; and to hold governments, the UN, and themselves accountable to ensure that the goals of the 2011 Political Declaration on AIDS are met.

Based on the barriers to youth involvement, six priority areas for action were identified (see the above figure).

To lead effectively, young people need: equal opportunities to participate to ensure diversity of perspectives, access to skills-building opportunities to increase youth influence, access to decision-making spaces to fully participate, access to information to become and remain informed, access to and create strategic networks for collective action, and access to sustainable funding to pursue youth-owned agendas.

These six priority areas lay the foundation for the actions recommended to the UNAIDS Secretariat for how it should collaborate with a new generation in the AIDS response.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP: EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Expected outcomes per priority area and recommended actions

This strategy will contribute to achieving the bold targets set in the 2011 Political Declaration on AIDS by increasing youth leadership, ownership, and mobilization in the AIDS response at the country, regional, and global level by 2015.

1 Young people's skills for effective leadership at all levels of the AIDS response strengthened

- 1.1 | Reinforce resources for open learning of leadership skills
- 1.2 | Provide opportunities for leadership training within the UNAIDS Secretariat
- 1.3 | Develop an evidence base on the impact of youth leadership and participation in policy and programme development

2 Full youth participation in the AIDS response at the country, regional, and global level ensured

- 2.1 | Advocate for including young people in global decision-making bodies on AIDS
- 2.2 | Establish a youth reference group for the UNAIDS Secretariat
- 2.3 | Advocate for including young people in national and regional decision-making bodies on AIDS
- 2.4 | Advocate for youth participation in developing of HIV programmes at country level

3 Young people's access to HIV-related information improved

3.1 | Launch a global, co-created HIV campaign to increase HIV-related knowledge and reduce stigma

3.2 | Undertake participatory youth audits of national AIDS responses

3.3 | Create mechanisms for sharing knowledge and information on HIV and young people

3.4 | Ensure the systematic collection and effective dissemination of strategic information on HIV and young people

4 Strategic networks between UNAIDS Secretariat, youth networks, and other key players diversified and strengthened

4.1 | Partner with youth-led organizations of key populations at higher risk and young people living with HIV at country level

4.2 | Develop strategic networks with global and regional youth organizations with strong country presence

4.3 | Partner with universities and schools in the global south to support research on HIV and young people

4.4 | Explore opportunities for partnerships with the private sector

5 UNAIDS Secretariat outreach to both formal and informal networks of young people increased

5.1 | Establish youth dialogue platforms at the country level and partner with national youth councils and youth forums

5.2 | Hold yearly community Open Forums

5.3 | Expand the CrowdOutAIDS global crowdmap of youth organizations and youth-led projects

5.4 | Develop regional and national strategic outreach plans on young people and HIV

6 Young people's access to financial support increased

6.1 | Establish an e-training programme to build and strengthen resource management and mobilization skills

6.2 | Develop mechanisms for dialogue between young people and funders at the country level

6.3 | Advocate for strategic government funding for youth, including the support of youth-led funding initiatives

6.4 | Explore ways to diversify funding sources for youth-led projects

DEFINITIONS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

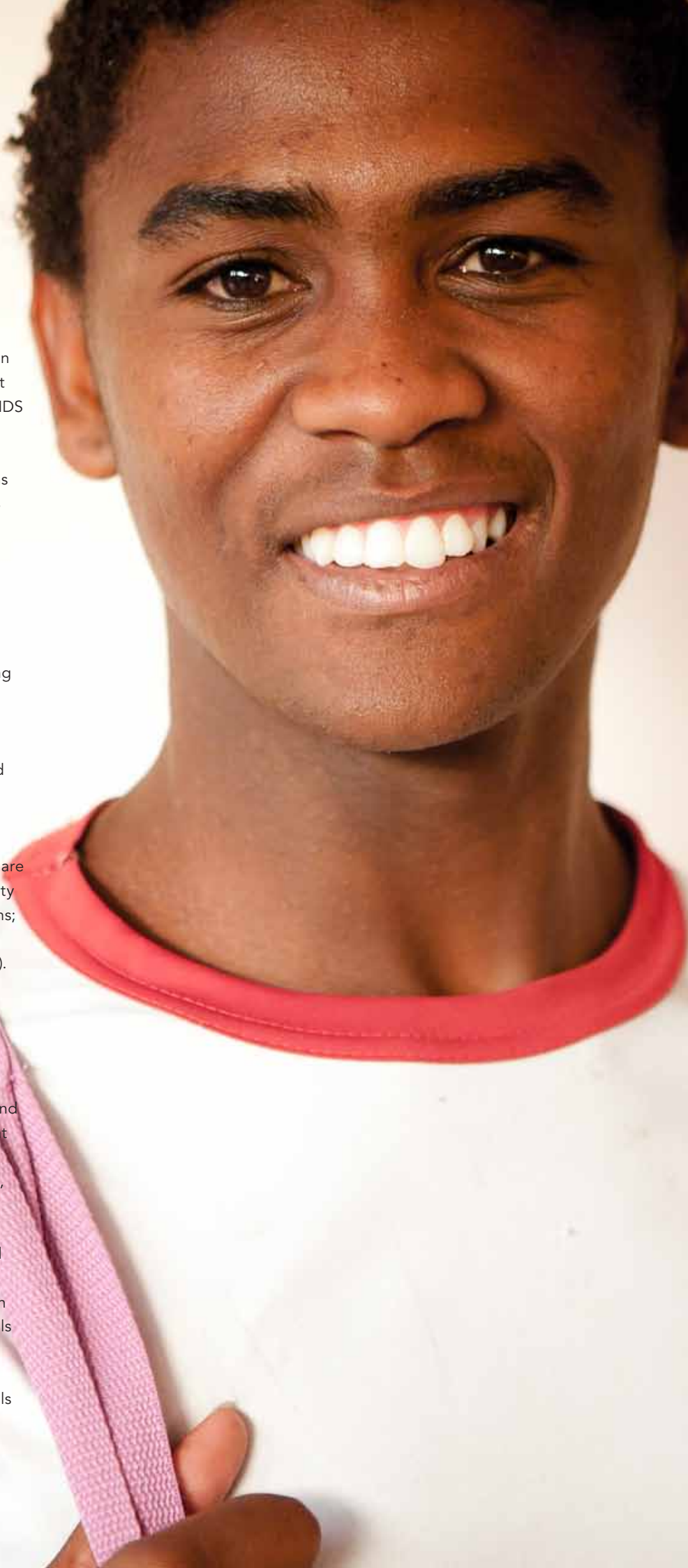
These definitions and guiding principles, drawn from the voices of young people who took part in the CrowdOutAIDS project, can help ensure that youth engagement and leadership affects the AIDS response.

Young people are defined by the United Nations as persons 15 to 24 years old. This definition has been expanded to 15 to 29 years old in order to acknowledge varying regional definitions and to ensure maximum mobilization.

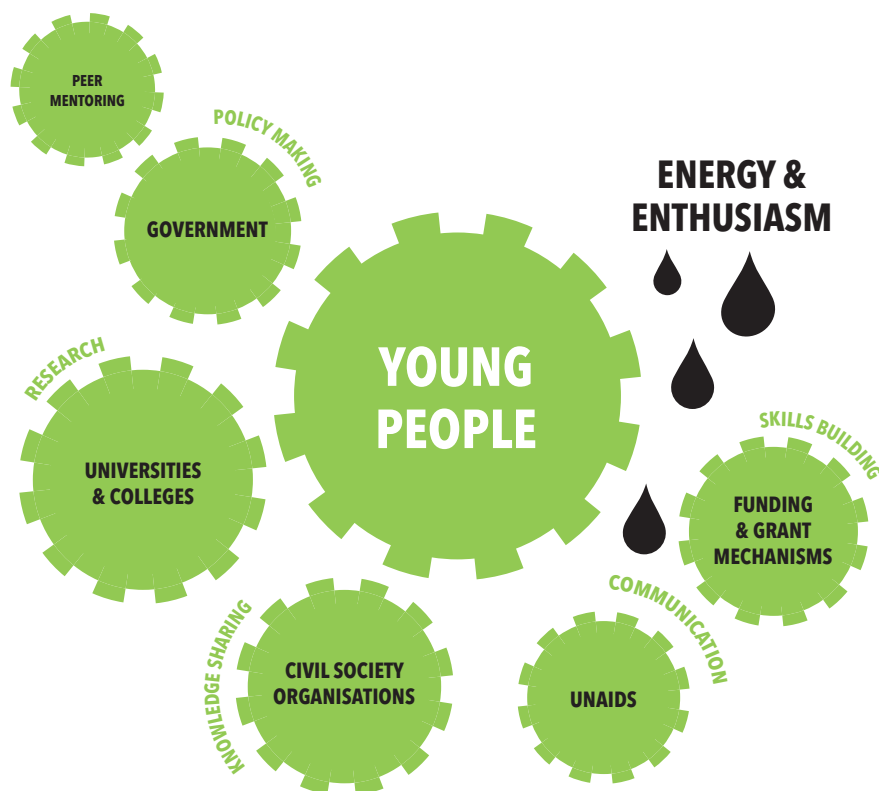
Youth engagement is the involvement of young people at every stage of a programme or project. It encompasses young people working in a volunteer or paid capacity both within and outside organizational frameworks. It promotes dialogue built on understanding and respect in order to increase empowerment, ownership, and mutual accountability.

Youth engagement is the most effective when ideas and solutions developed by diverse youth are sought and nurtured by governments; civil society organizations, including faith-based organizations; universities and colleges; funding and grant-making agencies; and the UN (see Fig. opposite). Youth engagement fosters peer mentorship and re-energizes and increases the scope of adult-led organizations and initiatives. Ideal youth engagement nurtures youth leadership.

Youth leadership is the motivation, guidance, and support necessary to channel youth engagement towards collective goals. Built on the willingness to be a role model and live by a set of principles, youth leadership is a long-term process that requires building skills in critical thinking, communication, organization, management, and evaluation provided through youth–youth and youth–adult partnerships. It requires the creation of space and opportunities to exercise these skills to influence decision-making. Experience is not a prerequisite for youth leadership. All young people should have the opportunity to build skills to become effective leaders. Voluntary youth leadership at the community level is crucial to create progressive social change.



Key guiding principles



Key guiding principles: The UNAIDS Secretariat and young people have a shared responsibility to uphold the following key principles—and should advocate for all partners to do the same, including UN entities, government ministries, and civil society organizations.

Respect for human rights: There should be a shared recognition of the human rights and dignity of each young person, and a commitment to supporting the realization of human rights for all.

Evidence-informed approaches: Programmes and policies related to young people should be informed by evidence and based on the highest standards of ethics.

Supportive capacity-building: All work with young people should strive to reinforce their leadership role by the transfer of skills and the creation of spaces where young people can participate and lead effectively.

Informed participation: Adequate information, time, and resources (i.e. financial and human) should be made available to ensure that young people are adequately prepared and have the confidence and opportunity to participate actively and fully.

Balanced representation: Young people have different needs determined by their life experiences, values, and beliefs, and this diversity needs to be respected and represented. Engagement strategies need to be adapted or new ones explored based on the HIV epidemic scenario in each country.

Joint decision-making: For youth to lead, real decision-making power must be transferred to young people. Decisions should be made jointly between new generation leaders and established leaders. Real decision-making power is key to counter the 'tokenistic' involvement of young people.

Transparent and accountable practice: All levels of engagement with and support for youth organizations and networks should be carried out in a transparent manner and properly documented. To ensure accountability, clear feedback channels and mechanisms should be in place for both parties.

PRIORITY AREA 1

SKILLS FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

The first thing that comes to mind when I hear youth leadership mentioned by organizations and governing bodies is: investment in our future. With the rise of technology comes the demise of silence. Young people can take... a stand and make their voices heard!

– Online Open Forum

Youth leadership is about young people making decisions and working together in partnership with established leaders on equal terms. Leadership requires determination, focus, and a clear vision. It also includes an important dimension of accountability to a broader youth constituency—the responsibility of reporting back, establishing mechanisms for sharing information and transferring knowledge among peers.

Young people need the capacity and skills to enable them to take part in and effectively influence policy- and decision-making at all levels in the AIDS response. The UNAIDS Secretariat should therefore work to strengthen the capacity of young people—specifically young people living with HIV, young women, and key populations at higher risk—to equip them with the necessary skills to lead strong AIDS responses in their communities.

To ensure that young people's skills for effective leadership in the AIDS response are strengthened by 2015, the UNAIDS Secretariat should:

Key Action 1.1. Reinforce resources for open learning of leadership skills

In close cooperation with external partners and existing resources, the UNAIDS Secretariat should work to create, strengthen, expand, and promote online and offline training opportunities for young people to develop leadership skills for effective political advocacy and community mobilization. It should particularly work to strengthen capacity building programmes available to young people and key populations at higher risk to equip them to take active leadership for social change. The UNAIDS Secretariat should also advocate for integrating leadership development and skills-building into the formal curriculum in schools and institutions of higher education, and within informal learning spaces for out-of-school youth.

Key Action 1.2. Provide opportunities for leadership training within the UNAIDS Secretariat

To continue to build the capacity of young people, the UNAIDS Secretariat should strengthen its Special Youth Fellowship Programme, particularly the country fellowship component; expand internship opportunities at all levels in the UNAIDS Secretariat, including setting up an official internship scheme and roster; and revisit the 'Young Leaders Mentorship Hub', which includes an online platform for peer exchange of ideas and knowledge among young leaders and a two-way mentorship programme with established leaders at country and regional levels.

Key Action 1.3. Develop an evidence base on the impact of youth leadership and participation in policy and programme development

The UNAIDS Secretariat should work in close cooperation with key UN and civil society partners and other key stakeholders to develop a set of best practices and how-to guides on youth participation in order to more effectively promote and engage young people in policy and programme development at the national level. The UNAIDS Secretariat should seek to partner with an open-access journal to develop a supplement on youth leadership and participation in the AIDS response. Published submissions would form a solid evidence base on the impact of youth leadership and participation. Indicators on youth leadership and participation should be integrated into established reporting mechanisms such as the National Composite Policy Index (NCPI).

PRIORITY AREA 2

FULL YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Decision-making on... matters concerning youth is never given to the youth. Most youth organizations are led by persons beyond 35+ years of age; these people are put in charge of making the day to day decisions without the involvement of the youth... while we appreciate the wisdom from our elders, there is need to involve us during decision-making.

– Community Open Forum

Young people do not feel that they are consulted or represented in decision-making on AIDS issues. When the UN engages young people, the broader youth population often perceives this engagement as superficial, with the same individuals or organizations called upon despite the fact that many other potential youth partners exist.

To ensure full youth participation in the AIDS response at the country, regional, and global level by 2015, the UNAIDS Secretariat should:

Key Action 2.1. Advocate for including of young people in global decision-making bodies on AIDS

To lead by example, UNAIDS' governing body, the Programme Coordinating Board (PCB), should include, on a rotating basis, one youth delegate and one alternate via the PCB Nongovernmental Organization (NGO) Delegation. A support structure should be put in place to ensure capacity-building and knowledge transfer for youth delegates on the board. The Secretariat should advocate for the inclusion of young people in other key global decision-making bodies, such as the Global Fund Board and UN Member State Delegations to regional and global high-level meetings on AIDS.

Key Action 2.2. Establish a youth reference group for the UNAIDS Secretariat

A youth reference group should be established to inform the UNAIDS Secretariat's policy and programmes with young people. The reference group should also engage in and coordinate advocacy efforts at the global level to remove the social and legal barriers that block young people's access to HIV-related services. It should be regionally and gender balanced, and representatives from young key populations at higher risk and young people living with HIV should be encouraged to apply. Members should be selected on a rotating basis. Clear selection criteria should be defined to ensure that the reference group truly represents the perspectives of a diverse youth constituency.

Best practices of youth advisory boards, reference groups, and similar bodies should inform the set up of this group to ensure that common pitfalls are avoided and real representation and influence are achieved. The reference group should meet virtually on a regular basis, and a support structure to ensure capacity-building should be developed.

Key Action 2.3. Advocate for including young people in national and regional decision-making bodies on AIDS

To ensure that young people have greater opportunities to influence decision-making at the country and regional levels, the UNAIDS Secretariat should advocate for the inclusion of young people in all relevant decision-making structures, including Ministries of Health/Youth, National AIDS Commissions, Global Fund Country Coordinating Mechanisms, and regional economic communities, such as the Southern Africa Development Community and Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

In its advocacy efforts, the UNAIDS Secretariat should draw on best practices and youth engagement strategies already in place in some countries as well as the evidence generated in Key Action 1.3.

Key Action 2.4. Advocate for youth participation in developing HIV programmes at the country level

Programmes and campaigns developed with the direct input of young people are more likely to achieve effective outcomes, since they are more sensitive to the specific needs of young people. The UNAIDS Secretariat should strategically advocate for key partners and stakeholders to include young people in the full programme cycle, including design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

PRIORITY AREA 3

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Information about HIV should be passed down to young people in a way they would understand. There is no doubt that there has been information about HIV. But the problem is that the message is not being passed well.

– Community Open Forum

Today's young people are able to bring about change in their communities, but many young people still do not have access to the most basic information about how to make informed decisions about their own health and to protect themselves from HIV. Many young people living with HIV do not know their HIV status or do not have access to treatment. Furthermore, for effective political advocacy, young people need access to 'youth-friendly' information on how political decisions are made, which laws are in place that prevent young people from accessing services, and which HIV programmes are actually effective for young people. There is a lack of strategic information on young people and HIV, and data are not broken down by age and sex. This is particularly true for key populations at higher risk. Even when information is available, it is not always used to guide programming (2).

To ensure that young people's access to HIV-related information is improved by 2015, the UNAIDS Secretariat should:

Key Action 3.1. Launch a global, co-created HIV campaign to increase HIV-related knowledge and reduce stigma

The first fully global, co-created HIV campaign should be launched. New modes of communication offer an unprecedented opportunity to raise HIV knowledge levels and reduce stigma. Using new media and arts-based tools will enable young people to fully own the campaign, which should include videos, photos, podcasts, blogs, text messages, radio, and a documentary film competition to more deeply explore the issues surrounding HIV and young people. Social media can turn a passive audience at the receiving end of health promotion campaigns into an actively engaged community that builds and uses applications that produce individualized and relevant health information. Virtual networking along with offline peer-to-peer outreach should be used to organize communities into action through dialogue, education, and activism.

Key Action 3.2. Undertake participatory youth audits of national AIDS responses

A standardized participatory methodology, which builds on existing initiatives (6), should be developed to audit national AIDS responses from a youth perspective. The audits, facilitated by the UNAIDS Secretariat, should make use of available data and focus on identifying punitive laws and social barriers to accessing HIV services, assessing access to evidence-informed HIV services, etc. Through this learning-by-doing initiative, young people will deepen their own understandings of the HIV epidemic. Based on the audits, the UNAIDS Secretariat should develop clear strategies in conjunction with youth-led organizations to advocate for removing social and legal barriers blocking the provision of and access to evidence-informed, youth-friendly HIV services. Situational assessments of the AIDS response and young people have been undertaken recently in some

countries. Although young researchers took part and some youth organizations were consulted, the processes were not fully participatory.

Key Action 3.3. Create mechanisms for sharing knowledge and information on HIV and young people

The UNAIDS Secretariat should develop mechanisms to ensure that young people are fully informed about its youth initiatives and opportunities, national and regional youth events, current research on HIV and young people, and governance mechanisms in the AIDS response and ways to influence them. Data and research summaries should be presented in a 'youth-friendly' format. Key policy briefs and discussion papers should be developed to spark debate and foster critical thinking. The online platform should establish partnerships to disseminate and leverage the existing resources of youth-led and youth-serving organizations and networks. Resources should not be produced solely in English.

Key Action 3.4. Ensure systematic collection and effective dissemination of strategic information on HIV and young people

The Global AIDS Response Progress Reporting is a system that reports on the HIV epidemic and AIDS response in each country. The UNAIDS Secretariat should push for all countries to report disaggregated data on HIV and young people by age and sex. The UNAIDS Secretariat should especially emphasize collecting and reporting data on key populations at higher risk. The UNAIDS Secretariat should also ensure more strategic use of available data on HIV and young people to inform programme development and implementation together with national counterparts, diverse youth populations, and researchers working on young people and HIV.

PRIORITY AREA 4

STRATEGIC NETWORKS

UNAIDS should partner with youth organizations directly to ensure that [results] are achieved.

A lot of red tape and corruption cut youths' dreams short.

– Community Open Forum

Civic activism and the leadership exercised by people living with and affected by HIV have been essential components of the AIDS response. As the international community comes together to review the Millennium Development Goals to be reached by 2015 and to develop a post-2015 development agenda, it is essential for the UNAIDS Secretariat to establish links with the broader youth movements (i.e. human rights, gender equality, and social justice) in order to better exploit the full potential of new strategic partnerships striving for social change.

To ensure that strategic networks between the UNAIDS Secretariat, youth networks, and other key players are diversified and strengthened by 2015, the Secretariat should:

Key Action 4.1. Partner with youth-led organizations of key populations at higher risk and young people living with HIV at country level

The UNAIDS Secretariat should broker strategic alliances between networks and organizations of young people living with HIV, young people from key populations at higher risk, and the broader youth constituency to establish a common agenda for social change. Facilitating strategic alliances among the various actors should forge a unified movement to reinforce community responses and local activism. The UNAIDS Secretariat should also facilitate links between youth organizations and its Cosponsors.

In many regions and countries, work is in progress to recognize and develop a strong youth voice in the AIDS response and channel it through more formal structures. Where formal structures do not yet exist, the UNAIDS Secretariat should seek out and engage loosely organized networks and support organizational development.

Key Action 4.2. Develop strategic networks with global and regional youth organizations with strong country presence

The UNAIDS Secretariat should further reinforce its cooperation with youth organizations and networks at the global and regional levels. Links between the UNAIDS Secretariat and global umbrella bodies should be created, with a focus on membership-based organizations with strong national and local chapters in the countries hardest hit by the epidemic. At the global level, the UNAIDS Secretariat should partner with youth development think tanks and youth organizations to strategically frame and shape the global agenda on young people and HIV.

Key Action 4.3. Partner with universities and schools in the global south to support research on HIV and young people

To inspire a new generation of young researchers to lead the emerging agenda on HIV, the UNAIDS Secretariat should establish grants for students from low- and middle-income countries. Operational and participatory research in a broad range of academic fields should be especially encouraged. A yearly call for research proposals should be made, and young researchers from high impact countries should have priority in the selection process. In generalized epidemics, research should focus on young people in general and young women in particular, and in concentrated epidemics, the focus should be on key populations at higher risk. The young researchers receiving the grants should commit to sharing their findings with the UNAIDS Secretariat, and exceptional studies that have the potential to be published will be reviewed and critiqued by Secretariat staff. The research grants will build the capacity of young researchers, and the research findings will contribute to improving knowledge about HIV and young people at the country level.

Key Action 4.4. Explore opportunities for partnerships with the private sector

With the increasing gap between HIV investment needs and resource availability, the UNAIDS Secretariat should explore opportunities for partnerships, especially with innovative technology companies, to enable greater participation and accountability in the AIDS response. The UNAIDS Secretariat should particularly focus on establishing alliances with private sector institutions located in low- and middle-income countries to promote ownership and south-to-south cooperation.

PRIORITY AREA 5

INCREASED OUTREACH

UNAIDS should identify young people who are truly passionate and committed to the cause of combating AIDS, as a base for impacting other young people and their communities.

– Q&A Application

Although young people express a desire to “have their voices heard”, there are few channels or opportunities for participation, especially for young people who lack formal qualifications and experience. The UNAIDS Secretariat should develop plans at the country level to reach a wider community of committed young people with information about how to participate in and influence national agenda-setting in order to ensure balanced and diverse representation of perspectives.

To ensure increased outreach to both formal and informal networks of young people by 2015, the UNAIDS Secretariat should:

Key Action 5.1. Establish youth dialogue platforms at the country level and partner with national youth councils and forums

To enable youth-led organizations to define a common action agenda and support the development of and advocate for mechanisms for youth inclusion in decision-making at the country level, the UNAIDS Secretariat should convene youth organizations and networks in country-level dialogue forums with key government decision-makers.

The UNAIDS Secretariat should also seek out the engagement of young people who have demonstrated a commitment to the AIDS response and advocate including them in national youth councils and forums as spokespersons on HIV issues.

Key Action 5.2. Hold yearly community Open Forums

The CrowdOutAIDS community Open Forums allowed for the successful integration of grassroots perspectives into UN policy-making. The UNAIDS Secretariat should support the organization of yearly community forums until 2015. These forums should focus on defining joint action for social change at the country level based on the key operational aspects of the Secretariat's work with young people to meet the targets of the 2011 Political Declaration on AIDS. Each year, a clear purpose for the forums should be set to ensure that the outputs of the discussions feed into policy and programme development at the national, regional, and global levels. The UNAIDS Secretariat should also institutionalize the online Open Forums to serve as a feedback and mutual accountability mechanism between the broader youth constituency and the youth reference group, young people on the UNAIDS PCB NGO Delegation, and the UNAIDS Secretariat staff working on the youth agenda.

Key Action 5.3. Expand the CrowdOutAIDS global crowdmap of youth organizations and youth-led projects

The CrowdOutAIDS crowdmap, with more than 300 youth-led and youth-serving organizations registered, should be expanded to include youth-focused projects on HIV and be used as a networking tool by the UNAIDS Secretariat in its work with young people. The Secretariat should develop a youth partnership framework and issue an open invitation to all mapped youth organizations to ask for their partnership. UNAIDS country offices should undertake targeted outreach to encourage youth organizations to sign up to be part of the crowdmapped database.

Key Action 5.4. Develop regional and national strategic outreach plans on young people and HIV

The UNAIDS Secretariat should develop regional thematic outreach plans on young people and HIV to generate visibility on youth issues in the AIDS response and strategically influence public opinion and debate. The aim should be to remove the social and legal barriers that prevent young people from accessing HIV services, to dispel taboos around sexuality, and to eliminate stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV.

PRIORITY AREA 6

SMARTER FUNDING

Not allowing youth organizations... to access funding because there is no prior experience with projects and requesting to have a sponsor organization. How will we get experience if we are not supported?

– Community Open Forum

Youth-led organizations experience great challenges in securing sustainable core funding for their work. At the same time, young people acknowledge that they need to strengthen their technical skills to be able to prove that they are financially accountable. Organizations securing funds under a youth mandate need to incorporate and meaningfully engage young people in their activities. Moreover, young people highlight that awareness and prevention efforts that fall outside organizational frameworks also need to be financially supported.

To ensure that youth access to financial support increases by 2015, the UNAIDS Secretariat should:

Key Action 6.1. Establish an e-training programme to build and strengthen resource management and mobilization skills

A multilingual youth e-training programme to cultivate strong skills in organizational management and resource mobilization should be developed in collaboration with organizations that have experience in designing and running e-courses and trainings. The programme should be freely accessible year round on the online platform. All training material should be made available in hard copy and distributed through UNAIDS Secretariat country offices/partner offices to communities without Internet access. To foster peer mentorship, programme graduates should be encouraged to run peer-to-peer training sessions in their communities. Rural-urban organizational partnerships supported by grassroots grants or government funding should distribute hard copies of training materials.

Key Action 6.2. Develop mechanisms for dialogue between young people and funders at the country level

Dialogue mechanisms should be set up to ensure that youth-led organizations, youth-serving NGOs, and funders (i.e., public/private donors, grassroots grant-making groups, and government ministries) are aware of each other's agendas and that youth input drives the national allocation of funding. A Donor Dialogue space, subdivided by country, should be created on the online platform where funders can list HIV funding opportunities, outline current funding agendas, and openly track youth funding through progress reports prepared by recipients. Country-specific dialogues between funders and youth-led/youth-serving organizations should be held, online and offline, with support from UNAIDS Secretariat country offices to discuss, among other things, opportunities for capacity-building funding and options for the funding of initiatives by key populations at higher risk. Youth participants should produce post-session reports and post them on the online platform.

Key Action 6.3. Advocate for strategic government funding for youth, including the support of youth-led funding initiatives

The UNAIDS Secretariat should advocate for governments to consult with civil society organizations to adopt specific strategies on HIV and young people and include spending breakdowns in national strategic plans. The UNAIDS Secretariat should advocate for government funds to be distributed through accountable youth-led grant-making groups to better meet youth priorities and as a first step in reaching marginalized young people. To facilitate this, UNAIDS Secretariat country offices should form closer partnerships with youth-led grant-making groups and ensure that reports on emerging best practices are uploaded to the online platform for government access.

Key Action 6.4. Explore ways to diversify funding sources for youth-led projects

A guide to innovative, alternative funding options, including crowdfunding (7), should be developed and provided via the online platform. The UNAIDS Secretariat should partner with established crowdfunding services and make it possible to submit projects through the online platform. Crowdfunding can support projects led by marginalized young people who are not included under government spending strategies or projects led by youth organizations without official organization status.

The creation of this strategy adopted two powerful innovations: crowdsourcing and open data. This has increased transparency and reduced the barriers that keep young people from sharing their stories or raising their voices to demand youth-led change. Progress towards each strategic priority area and key action must be monitored and evaluated in a manner that young people can understand, openly access, and contribute to. Continuing these processes will help establish a strong and legitimate accountability framework.

Tracking progress

The online platform should track progress towards a set of indicators developed for each strategic priority area and key actions. Indicators should be integrated and aligned to existing reporting systems whenever possible. The real-time evaluation of the UNAIDS Secretariat's and partner organizations' work with young people will create a constant sense of progress.

Community reporting by youth-led organizations and networks without access to the Internet should be done via self-evaluation surveys/report cards delivered to UNAIDS Secretariat country offices and then uploaded to the online platform.

New ways to report on progress

Media-based and citizen journalism approaches to reporting should be incorporated into the online platform. Youth-led organizations should submit video reports, podcast reports, text messages, etc. to provide updates on activities, and the UNAIDS Secretariat should establish distribution partnerships with media companies and online publishers to ensure maximum reach. For offline reporting, traditional media such as radio and TV should be employed at both the local and national levels, especially within universities and across university networks, to highlight the progress made.

Open data in the AIDS response

Open data on budgeting and spending: Data on resource allocation for youth-led organizations and initiatives at the national, regional, and global levels should be reported openly on the online platform to ensure transparency.

Open data on the HIV epidemic: Through open data platforms, people should be able to compare data sets and create maps and other data visualizations for their own use and analysis. Open data provides the foundation for improved accountability through informed data journalism. The UNAIDS Secretariat should advocate for open data as a concept as part of efforts to increase accountability in the AIDS response.



IT'S A WRAP!

This document has outlined recommendations for strategic actions the UNAIDS Secretariat should undertake to collaborate effectively with a new generation of young leaders in the AIDS response as part of its New Generation Leadership Strategy. Developed through a groundbreaking transparent and inclusive approach, these recommendations, if fully implemented, will increase youth leadership, ownership, and mobilization towards achieving the bold targets set in the 2011 Political Declaration on AIDS by 2015.

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