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Summary of Findings and Recommendations

The HIV/AIDS epidemic is the biggest crisis facing today's young generation. Each day 6,000 young people are infected with HIV. The UNGASS Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS recognizes the specific vulnerability of young people to HIV and AIDS and, in 2001, established time-bound targets to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS, in partnership with young people.

Young people from 12 countries around the world reported on the progress made in their countries towards achieving the UNGASS targets related to young people. Young people call on their governments to take their findings and recommendations into consideration to ensure that young people can lead healthy, safe lives free of HIV and AIDS. Achieving the targets set out in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS requires increased leadership and commitment. Young people worldwide ask that their governments face this challenge and work with young people hand in hand. Specifically, young people ask governments to:

- > Address the needs of young people in their National AIDS Programmes and Policies and in their National Youth Policies;
- > Scale up funding for programmes that work with and for young people on HIV/AIDS, especially with youth-driven initiatives;
- > Increase coverage of comprehensive youth-friendly information and services - including life skills-based education, voluntary and confidential counselling and testing, and condoms;
- > Work in full partnership with young people, especially young people living with HIV and AIDS, and with youth-driven initiatives on HIV/AIDS policy-making and programme design, implementation, and evaluation.

Young people conducted research in the following countries: Bangladesh, Cameroon, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ghana, India, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Sudan, and Zambia.



UNFPA/Sarath Perera

OUR VOICE, OUR FUTURE

YOUNG PEOPLE REPORT
ON PROGRESS MADE ON
THE UNGASS DECLARATION OF
COMMITMENT ON HIV/AIDS

Global Youth Partners

www.unfpa.org/hiv/gyp

Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS

www.youthaidscoalition.org

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The following section summarizes the main findings in the report, covering four areas: political commitment, financial commitment, access to information and services, and youth participation.

Political Commitment

Young people found that overall political commitment to ensuring healthy, safe lives for young people has increased, that governments are acknowledging young people's specific vulnerability to HIV, and that some are making youth a priority in their National AIDS Plans. However, young people identified shortfalls in policy design and challenges for programme implementation and made specific recommendations to scale up commitment.

Young people recommend that governments:

- > Increase commitment and leadership in openly addressing young people's vulnerability to HIV.
- > Develop and effectively implement policies through multi-sectoral approaches that:
 - Address the specific needs of diverse vulnerable groups of youth, such as young women and girls and injecting drug users, to ensure that the root causes of young people's vulnerability are effectively addressed, including poverty, sociocultural taboos, and gender inequality;
 - Are evidence-informed and provide a comprehensive set of interventions including life-skills-based education in schools, widespread coverage of youth-friendly health services and voluntary counselling and testing as well as access to condoms; and
 - Ensure that young people living with HIV and AIDS do not face stigma and discrimination.
- > Develop strategies that address challenges in the implementation of youth policies, such as capacity building of service providers, teachers, government ministries, religious and community leaders, young people and other stakeholders.
- > Ensure participation of all stakeholders, including young people and youth living with HIV and AIDS, in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies.

Financial Commitment

While progress has been made in terms of political commitment, young people stressed the need for governments to allocate funds for programme implementation and evaluation, in full partnership with young people. Overall, the current level of financial commitment for HIV prevention among young people is not sufficient to effectively address the epidemic. Young people called on their governments to increase partnerships with and support to youth-driven initiatives, and to rely less heavily on donor funds that often come with harmful restrictions on sexual and reproductive health education and condoms—crucial components of effective HIV prevention interventions.

Young people recommend that governments:

- > Allocate funds specifically for young people and HIV/AIDS, and ensure transparency by making information on funds publicly available through a National HIV/AIDS Account.
- > Scale up funding for interventions that address and integrate the root causes of HIV vulnerability, such as poverty and unemployment amongst young people, with comprehensive programmes such as income-generation and micro-credit initiatives.
- > Reduce duplication of services and funding by coordinating collaboration between government and NGO programmes and youth-driven initiatives.
- > Partner with and fund youth-driven initiatives such as peer education programmes, and complement funding with capacity-building for young people through establishment of youth-adult partnerships.
- > Match the allocation of funds to the needs of a country's specific vulnerable populations, and rely less heavily on donor funds that may come with restrictive barriers and agendas.
- > Encourage and fund inter-ministry collaborative interventions on young people's sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS, and establish a Ministry of Youth if none exists, with specific HIV/AIDS programming.

Access to Information and Services

Globally, young people do not have adequate access to life saving, youth-friendly information and services. Young people identified the institutionalization of a comprehensive set of interventions, which includes life-skills-based education in schools, voluntary and confidential counselling and testing (VCCT) and youth-friendly health services, as important steps to ensuring that youth can access information and services regularly and easily.

Young people recommend that governments:

- > Encourage the active, meaningful participation of young people in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of interventions to increase their effectiveness and appropriateness.
- > Implement and scale up the coverage of a comprehensive set of evidence-informed interventions through:
 - Institutionalizing life-skills-based education in schools;
 - Providing information, services, and life-skills-based education for out-of-school youth;
 - Increasing the number and geographical spread of youth-friendly health services;
 - Increasing the number and geographical spread of VCCT centers; and
 - Establishing a national strategy for improving condom access.

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- > Provide comprehensive information that is targeted specifically at young people, tailored according to their specific needs, cultural context, vulnerability, and level of sexual activity.
- > Build the capacity of, and sensitize, the media to ensure that messages and campaigns are accurate, evidence-based and do not encourage HIV-related stigma and discrimination.

Youth Participation

Young people commended efforts to making interventions youth-appropriate by including their peers in the development and implementation of interventions and creating messages and services tailored to young people's diverse needs, vulnerability, and levels of sexual activity. However, youth reported that, in general, they were not involved in the process as part of the solution, but rather were seen as part of the problem. Participation is often not formalized or meaningful, even though young people's voices must be heard and their talents cultivated for interventions to be appropriate and successful.

Young people recommend that governments:

- > Increase young people's participation in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and services.
- > Scale up the capacity building of young people in programme design, research and data collection, monitoring and evaluation, fundraising, and advocacy to influence, draft and advance policy.
- > Develop ad-hoc Inter-Ministerial Working Groups on Youth with all concerned government ministries, local NGOs and UN agencies, to coordinate implementation of a National Youth Policy and National Youth Action Plan on a regular basis.
- > Formalize youth participation, incorporating such a structure into the national strategic plan, HIV/AIDS policy, and youth policy.
- > Recognize the efficacy of youth-led initiatives and build partnerships with young people to increase progress toward reaching UNGASS targets.
- > Support properly institutionalized, self-sustainable youth-based organizations and work to build respect and regard for youth initiatives working on reproductive health and HIV/AIDS issues.