



TIME TO ACT NOW.

Key messages

YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY is a campaign in response to the challenges that affect the rights of adolescents and young people in the Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) region to education and health. www.youngpeopletoday.net. It's **TIME TO ACT NOW**.

Challenges in the ESA region:

- 430,000 new HIV infections per year (50 per hour) most of them among young women;
- 2.6 million young people aged 15-24 are living with HIV in the region;
- < 40% of young people have adequate HIV prevention knowledge;
- An estimated 10.5 million children living in the ESA region have been orphaned by AIDS;
- By age 17, 1 in 5 young women in 6 countries have started child bearing, which poses a significant risk to their health;
- Young people have limited access to critical health services including HIV and pregnancy prevention services;
- Even where they exist, education and health programmes to promote comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and sexual and reproductive health are not fully resourced or scaled up;
- Cultural traditions and practices sometimes act as barriers rather than protecting the health and future of young people;
- Health services are often withheld from young people because of their age, marital or legal status;
- Sexual and gender-based violence is a pervasive reality affecting the lives of girls and young women in many countries across the region.

What changes do we need to make a healthy and 'AIDS-free future' a reality for all?

1. Governments must recognise the needs of adolescents and young people and commit to implementing international commitments including the ICPD programme of action;
2. Education and health need to work together on a common agenda for adolescents and young people;
3. Urgently review – and where necessary amend – existing laws and policies to promote independent access to services;
4. Maximise the protective effect of education through Education for All (EFA) and ensure that all adolescents and young people are in school and have the right to education;
5. Initiate and scale up age-appropriate sexuality education during primary school education;

6. Integrate and scale up youth-friendly, non-judgemental and confidential HIV and SRH services;
7. Ensure young people have access to the commodities that they need to prevent pregnancy and HIV, including condoms;
8. Strengthen gender equality and rights within education and health services;
9. Jointly mobilise resources for scaled up action and joint programming;
10. Ensure that the design and delivery of comprehensive sexuality education and SRH programmes include ample participation by communities and families - particularly adolescents, young people, and civil society.

Why comprehensive sexuality education?

- ✓ it prepares adolescents and young people for puberty and beyond, to understand their body, to make informed decisions about relationships and develop critical skills
- ✓ it empowers adolescents and young people to prevent unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV
- ✓ it supports adolescents and young people to make better, informed decisions and often delays initiation of sexual activity and reduces sexual risk taking – *it does not lead to increased sexual activity*
- ✓ it encourages adolescents and young people to have more equitable and healthy relationships
- ✓ it can reduce gender-based violence, bullying and discrimination
- ✓ it gives adolescents and young people the confidence to access services and support

Why do we need youth-friendly services?

- ✓ it fulfils the right to health and well-being of adolescents and young people and it is a public health responsibility to protect the health of the next generation
- ✓ when offered as a package, sexual and reproductive health services and sexuality education are more effective
- ✓ it ensures that young people feel safe and confident to access services
- ✓ it empowers adolescents and young people to make their own choices about their health, as well as sexual and reproductive health issues
- ✓ access to services and commodities promotes good health as well as limiting bad health or illness
- ✓ it reduces unintended pregnancy, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections which impact on the health of adolescents and young people
- ✓ it improves maternal and child survival rates

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A campaign supported by:

UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, EAC, SADC, Ford Foundation, Sweden, Church of Sweden, IPPF, INERELA+ and NORAD, civil society and adolescents and young people across the world.

For more information:

Visit the campaign website for resources and to join in the campaign: youngpeopletoday.net

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