

post-2015
Development Framework

...what's in it for **young people?**

SAVE THE DATE!
SEPT 26TH
1-3PM

Church Center for the United Nations
2nd Floor Conference Room
777 UN Plaza, New York

RSVP by Sept 15 post2015mdg@icaso.org

gyca HIV YOUNG FUND HOUSING WORKS icaso IGSS INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S HEALTH COALITION iavi Alliance AFRICAN SERVICES COMMITTEE STOP AIDS NOW!

Side event on the occasion of the UN General Assembly Special Event on the MDGs

New York, 26 September 2013



Background

According to UNAIDS 2013 figures, 4.6 million young people aged 15-24 are living with HIV. Yet young people living with and most affected by HIV often have no access to comprehensive health services which meet their HIV prevention and treatment needs as well as their sexual reproductive health needs. In addition, existing health services in many countries do often not take into account the structural factors that compound vulnerability to HIV for young people. These include gender-based discrimination and violence, poverty, harmful traditional practices, and policies and laws which criminalize same-sex practices, sex work, drug use, and HIV transmission.

In the ongoing post-2015 debates there is a need for a specific emphasis on young people living with and most affected by HIV and inclusion of concrete targets related to these young people's access to comprehensive health services. If this is not included, there is a real risk that the new development goals will not contribute to improved access to services, improved health outcomes and protection of the rights of young people.

In addition, a substantive effort should be made to include the voices of young people in the post-2015 debates in a meaningful way, including those living with HIV, young women, young sex workers, young men who have sex with men, young transgender people, and young people who use drugs to ensure that the framework responds to their specific needs.

The event

The side event "Post-2015 Development Framework...what's in it for young people?" was held following the General Assembly 68th Session's High Level Event on the MDGs and brought together representatives of UN Member States, UN agencies and civil society, as well as key politicians and young people living with and affected by HIV. The aim was to facilitate an open and frank discussion with young people living with and affected by HIV and representatives of key population groups giving them a voice in the global post-2015 debate and to better understand the challenges they face in accessing comprehensive HIV and sexual and reproductive health services and their needs and hopes for the future.

The event was co-organized by the African Services Committee, the Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS (GYCA), the HIV Young Leaders Fund, Housing Works, ICASO, International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI), International Civil Society Support (ICSS), the International HIV/AIDS Alliance, the International Women's Health Coalition and STOP AIDS NOW!.

The discussion was moderated by Baba Goumbala, the International HIV/AIDS Alliance Africa Representative and speakers included:

- Dr. Luiz Loures, Deputy Director, UNAIDS
- MEP Michael Cashman, UK Member of the European Parliament
- Kiara St James, black trans-activist, USA
- Sidney Hushie, Programs Officer of the South Secretariat, GYCA, Ghana
- Jackie Kemigisha, Founder and Executive Director of the Girls Awake Foundation, Uganda
- Oseias Cerqueira, Legal Counsel of the Support Group for the Prevention of AIDS, Brazil

The panel discussion

Baba Goumbala set the scene by referring to the High Level Panel Report which emphasizes "Leaving no one behind" as one of the five big transformative shifts that need to drive the post-2015 agenda.



For the first time, rights of young people are taken up in the conversation and the UN Secretary General will include young people in the working groups for development he is planning to set up for the new post-2015 Framework. Young people are facing many challenges in terms of accessing health care, education and jobs. And this concern is even stronger when it comes to young men who have sex with men, sex workers, prisoners, etc. Engaging young people in the development of the post-2015 framework will be crucial to achieve success. "If we don't invest in young people now, the future will be expensive."

Dr. Luiz Loures highlighted the fundamental change we are going through. For the first time in the history of the AIDS epidemic, we are starting to talk about the end of AIDS. There are one million HIV infections less than ten years ago, ten million people on treatment and there are half a million less AIDS-related deaths than in 2005. A lot has changed since the 1980's. "I saw the devastation when I was working as a doctor in Brazil in the 1980s. There were days when I could not leave the hospital because there was no other doctor to hand over to, as doctors refused to treat HIV patients."



But still great barriers remain, such as stigma and discrimination. "The stigma is more powerful than the virus. We have science to beat HIV, but we don't know how to beat stigma."

We can end AIDS by 2030 in the general population, but it will still exist in key populations. If we want results we should not leave anyone behind and have to make use of this major opportunity of the post-2015 development framework to ensure we target most affected populations and that the money is going where the epidemic is. "As I see it, that means a focus on key populations and on young women whose HIV prevalence far exceeds that of young men."



MEP Michael Cashman added that the next development framework may very well leave behind the most vulnerable unless governments rescind oppressive legislation that criminalizes already marginalized populations, including men who have sex with men, sex workers, people who use drugs, transgender people and people living with HIV. He is convinced that there is no future for

development if young people's voices are not heard. At age 63, he is not seeking re-election as a Member of the European Parliament in the European elections of May 2014 to give a chance to young people to take over the chairs in the Parliament.

Kiara St James discussed her experience as a homeless transgender woman of color who was consistently refused a bed in New York City shelters, how there were no health services available for trans-people and how trans-women were often forced into engaging in survival sex. She saw the death of over half of the trans-community she knew. Discrimination resulted in a very high rate of suicides within the community and HIV prevalence was very high.

Still today only 16 out of 50 American states have protection regulations for trans- people and the discrimination especially against black trans-people is still very high. People in her community are still getting murdered.

She talked about the need for inclusiveness: "one transgender person cannot speak for all transgender people. A gay man cannot speak for a transgender person." She also highlighted the importance of having access to safe housing and the need to involve transgender people at all levels of decision-making, including at the local level.



Sydney Hushie who has been a youth AIDS activist for over a decade expressed his concern that politicians are talking about numbers instead of people. He said that young people are a strong force for change and have actively convened at the global level.



“We have been asking for what we want.” It is now a matter of getting governments and other key stakeholders to listen to us and take us seriously. Young people should not need to continue advocating for getting a voice.”

His main recommendations for post-2015 were that access to relevant data and information need to be strengthened and programming for young people should be led by evidence. We need more innovative and effective ways of prevention including making science more attractive for young people.

He also had one key message for politicians: “legislate all you want, but you can’t legislate who I love or sleep with.”

Jackline Kemigisha spoke about her experience as a survivor of rape when she was a young girl and how she contracted HIV and other STDs as a result of the sexual violence. Youth-friendly services are not widely available and the health providers she met when trying to access treatment were judgmental because she was young.



She said that in Uganda people think that not talking about sex will stop young people from having sex, so comprehensive youth friendly programmes do not exist. She emphasized the need for young people to have access to relevant and quality information. This is the responsibility of the State but also of parents. “Youth are getting blamed for wrong decisions while not providing them with the information they need to make the right choices.”

She highlighted the need for governments to incorporate programs for young people in existing clinics and health systems, while emphasizing the diversity of young people, including those living with HIV. “The evidence in the community should inform the information to be provided, the package of services, the location of the health facility and the youth-friendly services. There should be choices, as there is no one size fits it all solution.”

Oseias Cerqueira explained how health services cannot be separated from politics. He said that there is an underrepresentation of young people in the Brazilian Parliament, as well as women and black people, which does not make it attractive for young people to vote. He is convinced that if young people would all vote, health policies in Brazil would be different. There is still a high level of stigma and discrimination regarding people living with and affected by HIV in the Brazilian health system. Young people are judged by health workers for their personal choices regarding drug use, sexual behaviour, treatment adherence, etc. “This is wrong: HIV should not be addressed as an individual issue for which you can be judged, but as an issue of public health policy.”



All the panellists urged the participants present at the event to use their voices whenever and wherever possible to advocate for a post-2015 agenda that promotes the empowerment of youth and universal access to youth-friendly health services so that no one is left behind. In addition to rolling back oppressive policies at the national level that discriminate against people living with and

affected by HIV, young people themselves must be empowered with the skills and resources to advocate on their own behalf.

Key messages

The key messages resulting from the discussions at the event were summarized by Dr Luiz Loures and Baba Goumbala:

- The end of AIDS is a crucial post-2015 business, not just one thing among many on the list. It is a major historical opportunity.
- We have to focus on the most vulnerable and marginalized: men who have sex with men, sex workers, people who use drugs, transgender persons and others.
- We should reject a post-2015 agenda that does not adequately address stigma and discrimination. Stigma and discrimination are the biggest barriers to getting to “zero” and that has to change. This is the only way to end AIDS.
- We need participation of young people at every level in every country. This should mean “full” participation, including of those most marginalized.

Event communication

- Women Deliver blog: <http://www.womendeliver.org/updates/entry/post-2015-development-framework-whats-in-it-for-young-people>
- Tweets: @theaidsalliance, @owstonlewis, @_GYCA_, @HannahUKYCC, @Sydneyhushie, @EmiPeeters, @AIDSvaccine, @WomenDeliver