

READY

RESILIENT & EMPOWERED
ADOLESCENTS & YOUNG PEOPLE

#WeAreREADY

READY NEWSLETTER #10 | JULY 2022



READY to re-engage!

Young people share experiences at the LGBTQI+ safe space hosted by Zvandiri, Zimbabwe ©Zvandiri/2022



Chinmay Modi, India

Welcome to the tenth edition of the READY newsletter! We are launching it at the International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2022) to spotlight the READY movement, with young people coming together to re-engage and deliver a youth-centred response. As countries slowly emerge from the grip of Covid, we want to highlight the key issues affecting young people and ensure our voices are heard.

This issue explores what re-engaging means and looks like in practice, with and for young people. I'm looking forward to presenting an e-poster at AIDS 2022 on youth-led monitoring for accountability in the HIV response. This is a vital, yet underfunded area. Tracking progress on the issues that matter to young people affected by HIV is critical. This entails young people in all our diversity and our networks holding duty bearers accountable for delivering youth-friendly services. The best example is the READY to care scorecard – developed by and for young people living with HIV – to assess the quality of healthcare.

Support for youth participation in decision-making must shift from tokenism to meaningful youth engagement. Technical and financial resources are required to build the capacity of youth-led networks and organisations active in the HIV response so that their efforts are sustainable.

As young people, we want the opportunity to raise our concerns in decision-making spaces. And that includes AIDS 2022. I'm fortunate to be able to attend the conference in person, but many young people couldn't because of problems getting visas and a challenging visa application process. Yet we represent the communities the world should be listening to. We all need to raise our voices to ensure this doesn't happen again.

C.O. Modi

Chinmay Modi

PROGRAMMES ADVISOR, GLOBAL NETWORK OF YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV (Y+ GLOBAL)

Speaking out at the AIDS 2022 regional youth consultation



Young advocate, Munnira Katongole, speaks out © Y+ Global/2022

BY MITCHEL TSIGA, COMMUNITY ADOLESCENT TREATMENT SUPPORTER (CATS), ZIMBABWE

As a young person from Zimbabwe, who supports other young people living with HIV, I was not only delighted but also excited to participate in the regional youth consultation that will input into AIDS 2022. At first, we were supposed to attend AIDS 2022 in person but couldn't because of the visa application process, so the regional youth consultation was an important platform for us to re-engage and amplify our voices.

The consultation was held in late June in Pretoria, South Africa. Supported by the READY movement, Frontline AIDS, UNDP and Y+ Global, it was attended by 52 young people in all our diversity from ten countries across East and Southern Africa. We shared our experiences, challenges and ideas for regional advocacy strategies. We agreed that as young people, we need to plan innovative, inclusive programme strategies and embrace digital technologies to strengthen advocacy.

We learned about the different programming and advocacy approaches that will help young people to learn and exchange ideas so that we can influence not only AIDS 2022 but all key advocacy spaces. We developed a set of recommendations for AIDS 2022, which are guiding advocacy plans in our own countries. Matsimbi, from Mozambique, said, "I've learnt a lot from this process and we will definitely adopt some of the advocacy strategies that are being implemented in other countries to influence policies."

When I found out I was going to travel to the regional consultation I feared I wasn't going to fit in and doubted I could have an impact. I felt I wouldn't amount to anything because of my background. Boarding a plane was an incredible experience. "At first, I didn't have any confidence, but surprisingly the conference made me realise that I could voice my experiences, frame the agenda and be part of important conversations. I felt heard."

The regional consultation included diverse groups of young key populations, who were excited to be there as they are usually left out. Kudakwashe said he was happy that the intersex community is now being recognised. All young people's voices must be heard!

Have a look at Frontline AIDS' roadmap for AIDS 2022



Young people drive the pandemic response in Mozambique

BY EOLANN MAC FADDEN, ADVISOR: HEALTH & COMMUNITY SYSTEMS, FRONTLINE AIDS AND CARLA MATSIMBE, PROJECT OFFICER, REGIONAL PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT INITIATIVE (REPSSI)

The impact of Covid shows that the world was unprepared to deal with new pandemics. Globally and nationally, few comprehensive, coordinated measures were in place to contain the spread of the virus.

However, large-scale efforts are now underway so that the global community will be in a stronger position to:

- Prevent pandemics from developing in the future
- Prepare for any pandemic that may occur
- Respond quickly and effectively to an outbreak.

These combined efforts are known as pandemic prevention, preparedness and response (PPPR). A key lesson from the response to both HIV and Covid is the leadership of communities and young people during pandemics, reaching people who would otherwise be left behind and sustaining healthcare despite lockdowns and other restrictions. For PPPR to be successful, it's crucial to involve community and youth representatives in decision-making processes and governance. Frontline AIDS is fighting to ensure these voices are heard.

READY 4 an AIDS Free Future, implemented by REPSSI in Maputo, Mozambique, demonstrates the value of involving young people in PPPR. CATS were a priority group for vaccination because the Ministry of Health requires all community actors to be fully vaccinated. REPSSI then lobbied the Provincial Health Directorate to support the process.

When the CATS first heard, many were scared. Some were reluctant, due to misinformation within communities about vaccines. And yet, all CATS were vaccinated between October and December 2021: a significant achievement for the programme.

The vaccination has supported their health and wellbeing and strengthened their role. CATS play a central part in preventing the spread of the disease by raising awareness of how to stay safe, encouraging other young people and communities to get vaccinated, and monitoring the process. Meze* said,

“ Before getting vaccinated, I was very afraid of getting Covid, but afterwards I lost the fear and began re-engaging with my family and friends.

CATS were happy that the programme cared for them and their health. As Hphoracy* said,

“ Vaccines won't kill us. What will kill us is neglect. We are young, we are the future!

* Not their real names

Ethical engagement of young people in the HIV response

BY TINASHE RUFURWADZO, DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMES, MANAGEMENT & GOVERNANCE, Y+ GLOBAL

'Nothing about us, without us' is the powerful call of many young advocates on different platforms to ensure that as young people we are engaged in key decision-making spaces that affect our health and rights. Over the years, there has been a commitment to increase youth engagement in shaping the global HIV response. Our involvement is crucial to reduce HIV transmission, improve quality of life and expand access to HIV services, with models of care informed by our lived realities.

Although we are engaging at multiple levels, our experience varies and young people often feel unsupported, exploited and tokenised. It's imperative that we feel safe, respected and valued.

Despite large numbers of organisations signing on to global statements or endorsing models of 'meaningful youth engagement', there is still work to be done. International conferences like AIDS 2022 must be accessible to everyone, especially the communities most affected by HIV. Sadly, this hasn't been the case. Governments, decision-makers and UN agencies must ensure that we can participate fully.

Y+ Global has therefore developed a guideline, We Matter, Value Us. to support organisations in working more effectively with young people living with HIV. These seven themes form the foundation of the meaningful and ethical framework for engaging young people living with HIV:

- Keeping young people safe
- Valuing the contribution of young people
- Ensuring diverse representation of young people
- Providing support
- Building positive youth partnerships
- Investing in young people and the sustainability of youth-led organisations
- Promoting greater accountability to young people.

Safe spaces open up dialogue among young key populations

BY BLESSED MAZVIKITE, CATS; CLARIS CHIGAMBA, ZVANDIRI ASSOCIATE - HARARE; AND TINOTENDA MAKOMBE, ZVANDIRI ASSOCIATE - MASVINGO



Overcoming stigma © Duarte 2022

In Zimbabwe, under READY+ phase 2, Zvandiri is collaborating with Zimbabwe Young Positives in hosting quarterly safe spaces for vulnerable adolescents and young people living with HIV. The groups welcome all young people, but focus on key populations such as LGBTQI+ young people and young people who sell sex. The safe spaces aim to build resilience, empowerment and knowledge so that young people can realise their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Since February 2022, nine meetings have taken place: four supporting LGBTQI+ young people and five supporting young people who sell sex, aged 15-24. Nearly 170 young people have attended in total. The meetings have provided a safe space for young sex workers to share the

challenges they faced during the Covid pandemic. With restrictions in place, many families surviving on income generated from the informal sector were hard hit. Some of the young women attending the safe spaces are mothers who work at the market, buying and selling clothes during the day and selling sex at night.

Stigma and discrimination remain a huge obstacle, so reaching marginalised groups has been difficult. They face abuse, despite being 'ordinary human beings trying to make a living in a harsh economic environment', in the words of one young person. Some young women have unprotected sex when clients offer more money, but this increases their risk of HIV, STIs, unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion. And many young people lack family support.

By contrast, the READY+ safe spaces open up dialogue and offer a much-needed break from stigma and judgment. Young people have developed ideas for campaigns in communities around sexual and reproductive health and rights to challenge attitudes to sex work and promote the rights of all young people to information and services. Discussions are ongoing about scaling up the meetings so that LGBTQI+ safe spaces can provide support with HIV disclosure to partners. As Vic* said, "Some of us don't know how to do it."

* Not their real name

Thank you!

Y+ Global and Frontline AIDS would like to say thanks to:

- All the young people at the forefront of this work.
- All the partners implementing READY projects: Africaid-Zvandiri, Coordinating Assembly of Non-Governmental Organisations (CANGO), Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (REPSSI), Paediatric - Adolescent Treatment Africa (PATA) and Young Africa.
- All other organisations that are part of the READY movement.
- The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Elton John AIDS Foundation for their support.

The guideline is accompanied by a set of resources for organisations and young people – available on the Y+ Global website. This greater accountability is key to building safe, sustained and effective partnerships with young people and youth-led organisations.



Watch the video about the resources:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eWsJC6stpu8>



SPOTLIGHT ON REGIONAL PARTNERS

Including young key populations in Zambia

BY BERRY D. NIBOGORA, POLICY SPECIALIST - LGBT, YOUNG KEY POPULATIONS & HUMAN RIGHTS, UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP)

In Zambia, as in many other countries, young key populations face challenges in accessing HIV and sexual and reproductive health and rights services, which puts them at risk of contracting HIV. But important progress is being made.

From 2016 to 2020, UNDP led efforts to address these vulnerabilities through the Linking Policy to Programming (LPP) project. LPP strengthened the capacity of young key populations and enhanced the generation and use of strategic information, including advocacy tools such as scorecards and reports. The project also supported decision-makers to respect the rights of young key populations.

Three lessons came out of the project.

1 Despite the hostile context of criminalisation, young key populations showed incredible resilience and agility in adopting digital technologies to expand the reach of their initiatives, sustain service provision and information sharing. As countries adjust to conducting policy advocacy online, young key populations with enhanced skills to use technology will be decisive in making Zambia respond to their needs and rights. Kingford Mkandawire, Project Associate at UNDP Zambia, said, "We've seen increased self-representation of young key populations at high-level multi-stakeholder forums and participation in policymaking processes."

2 Decision-makers need technical and financial support to help young key populations claim their rights and improve their health. This should be done in a way that demonstrates value for money and advances national development and human rights targets.

3 A youth-led approach to policy advocacy is crucial. Developing the capacity of young key population community leaders helped create an intersex organisation, the Intersex Society of Zambia, as well as a media and arts group, Umotto. Their efforts are paying off through increased visibility online and public discussion of the issues that affect young key populations.

Wanzyanji Mulwanda, radio broadcaster and former UN Volunteer at UNDP Zambia, said, "Digital platforms provide young people with the most broad and affordable advocacy tools to share their stories, thereby influencing people's perceptions towards stigma and discrimination against young key populations."

These lessons are informing the new UNDP-led #WeBelongAfrica programme, launched in April 2020.

Watch this space as we spotlight stories from READY+ regional partners supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Maputo.



FOLLOW THE MOVEMENT! Dates for the diary

29 July – 2 August	International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2022), Montreal, Canada
12 August	International Youth Day
19 – 23 September	Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) Forum 2022, Cancún, Mexico
28 September	International Safe Abortion Day
5 – 7 October	International Workshop on HIV & Adolescence, Cape Town, South Africa
11 October	International Day of the Girl Child
14 – 17 November	International Conference on Family Planning, Pattaya City, Thailand

Support the READY movement by following these events and posting to:



using #WeAreREADY. Many conferences are hybrid. Also visit <https://frontlineaids.org/ready> and <https://www.yplusglobal.org/projects-completed-ready-movement> for news and updates.