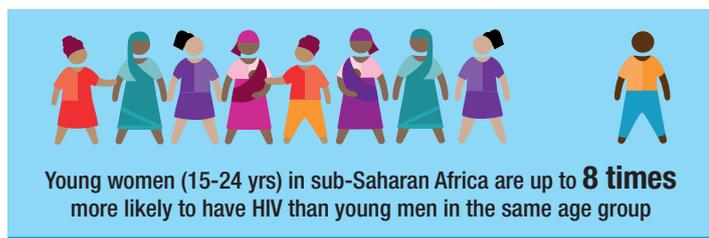




Acting on HIV to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality



The 2030 Agenda: Meeting the needs of Women and Girls

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, agreed by UN Member States in 2015, recognises the key role of gender equality for development and SDG5 commits the global community to “achieve gender equality and empower women and girls” by 2030.

Adolescent girls and young women, women living with HIV and women from populations most affected by HIV face significant barriers accessing comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services, including HIV prevention, treatment and care services.

Gender inequality manifests in harmful gender norms, gender-based violence (GBV) and women’s lack of access to and control of resources. These restrict women’s and girls’ ability to make decisions related to their sexual and reproductive health. Intimate partner violence and limited sexual decision making, forced or coerced sexual debut, poverty, limited access to sexuality education, and cultural taboos reduce women’s control over when, how and with whom they have sex, and therefore their ability to protect themselves from HIV and unintentional pregnancy. Stigma and discrimination related to age, gender, sexuality, gender identity and HIV status also present barriers to realising their SRHR.

The legal environment can create further obstacles to accessing services and rights when sex work, drug use, same-sex behaviour and transmission of HIV are criminalised, and when there are legal barriers and age restrictions to seeking family planning and safe abortion services.

Of the nine targets under this goal, five of them have direct relevance for HIV:

- 5.1** End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.
- 5.2** Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.
- 5.5** Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.
- 5.6** Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.
- 5.c** Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

The essential role of community action to achieve the SDGs

Communities are crucial partners in providing equitable, evidence-informed, gender-responsive and people-centred services to all who need them and deliver horizontal outcomes across the Sustainable Development Agenda. Investment in community action on health and education, for example, can yield positive outcomes on several of the SDGs, including poverty, equity and gender.



While donors and governments come and go, communities remain the driving forces for change and long-lasting development outcomes. Communities, including women, youth and key population-led organisations, must have access to specific funding streams and mechanisms to deliver an effective health response to everyone in need.

A crucial entry point to addressing GBV is integrated HIV and SRHR programmes. These help progress the SDG5 targets mentioned above, by:

- Linking marginalised and key populations to information, commodities and services, including adolescent girls and young women, women living with HIV and women most affected by HIV such as sex workers and women who use drugs.
- Protecting rights and helping to create an enabling environment – through formal structures, such as laws and policies, and informal structures, such as community led human rights violations reporting mechanisms, cultural norms and traditional practices.
- Building movements and leadership with, by and for adolescents, young people and populations most affected by HIV, GBV and other SRHR challenges, such as the READY movement (<https://www.facebook.com/READYMovement/>).

We call upon governments and donors to:

1. Jointly with civil society, review annual progress towards attaining the SDGs country targets.
2. Fully resource and invest in community action for community-based organisations and networks to promote peer-to-peer community mobilisation, leadership and mentorship strategies; to create demand for services; to challenge harmful gender norms, stereotypes and practices; and to promote linkages from prevention to care.
3. Review and revise laws and policies that undermine attempts to eliminate gender-based violence and discrimination and limit a joined up response to HIV and SRHR, including HIV testing and contraceptive services, laws on safe abortion and post-abortion care, and laws that criminalise key populations.
4. Support community health workers to deliver services and information on HIV, other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), GBV and family planning.
5. Train and sensitise healthcare workers on how to provide integrated HIV and SRHR services in a tailored and non-judgemental manner to ensure maximum uptake.
6. Ensure regular coordination and collaboration between HIV and SRHR teams within the Ministries of Health, Education and Gender.
7. Develop and implement comprehensive sexuality education in schools and in informal settings, ensuring that communities are part of the development of these curricula.
8. Increase access to mechanisms to safely report sexual and intimate partner violence in all its forms in order to advance access to justice.

Photo: Two girls burst into laughter during a sex education talk delivered by community peer supporters, Uganda © 2016 Peter Caton for the International HIV/AIDS Alliance

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