



# The linkages between the MDGs, Young People and HIV



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The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), agreed upon by governments of the world in the year 2000, have set the priorities for international development for the past decade. In the 10 years since the MDG targets were set, analysis indicates that there is still progress to be made on key issues relating to young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights. The Youth Coalition addresses some of these issues in this factsheet.<sup>1</sup>

### Focusing on young people is critical to achieving MDG 6

In 2007, 33 million people were infected with HIV.<sup>2</sup> Young people aged 15-24 account for an estimated 45% of new infections worldwide.<sup>3</sup> As the largest generation of young people in history, over 1 billion young people start their sexual and reproductive lives in a world where HIV is a reality. An integrated approach to their sexual and reproductive health and rights is crucial to achieving MDG 6.

#### **MDG Goal 6: Combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases**

##### **Target 6a: Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV and AIDS**

- 6.1 HIV prevalence among population aged 15-24 years
- 6.2 Condom use at last high-risk sex
- 6.3 Proportion of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV and AIDS
- 6.4 Ratio of school attendance of orphans to school attendance of non-orphans aged 10-14 years

##### **Target 6b: Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV and AIDS for all those who need it**

- 6.5 Proportion of population with advanced HIV infection with access to antiretroviral drugs

### Prevention of HIV

Due to a lack of comprehensive sexuality education and youth friendly services, and to non-supportive social and policy environments shaped by poverty, gender inequality, stigma and discrimination, young people are often unable to protect themselves from HIV infection. For this reason, when we talk about HIV prevention among young people, we must address it within a broader discussion of their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Research has identified that effective sexuality education and HIV prevention programs could affect multiple behaviours and/or achieve positive health impacts among young people. Those positive health impacts include: delay the first sex; reduce the frequency of sex; decrease the number of new partners; decreased incidence of unprotected sex as well as increase the usage of condoms and contraception.<sup>4,5</sup> In addition, these programs also lead to lower STI and/or pregnancy rates among young people.<sup>6</sup>

As a result, it is important to ensure that evidence-based information, comprehensive sexuality education, youth friendly services and reliable supplies of health commodities are provided to young people in order to protect their sexual and reproductive health and rights.<sup>7</sup>

### Meaningful youth participation

In order to achieve an effective HIV response among young people, the need for meaningful youth participation has been recognized by international commitments and declarations including the Programme of Action (PoA) of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Declaration of Commitments signed during the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on HIV in 2001.

- The 1994 ICPD Programme of Action states that all countries should involve young people in all levels of the programmes and decision making processes that affect their sexual and reproductive lives.<sup>8</sup>
- The Declaration of Commitment on HIV and AIDS, signed during the 2001 UNGASS, calls on states to acknowledge the particular role and significant contributions of young people and to recognize that their full involvement and participation in the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of programmes is crucial to the development of effective responses to the HIV and AIDS epidemic.<sup>9</sup>

### Recommendations

To achieve MDG 6, it is important for all stakeholders to work together in recognizing the important linkages between the Millennium Development Goals, young people and HIV. Thus, the Youth Coalition, an international organization of young people working for sexual and reproductive rights, calls on government, donors, and civil society organizations to:

1. Provide non-discriminatory, rights-based and gender sensitive comprehensive sexuality education including HIV education to young people in and out of school including those youth most at risk.<sup>10</sup>
2. Promote meaningful youth participation in all levels of programmes including design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, policy, and in the decision making processes related to young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights.
3. Ensure that young people have access to youth friendly sexual and reproductive health services and supplies that meet the needs of all young people, particularly marginalized groups, including but not limited to young people who use drugs, young sex workers, young men who have sex with men, young prisoners, young women and girls.
4. Ensure that young people living with HIV have access to affordable and sustainable antiretroviral treatment, care and support from society, community and family.
5. Remove restricted laws and policies that prevent young people from accessing sexual and reproductive health information, education and services, such as parental and age consent.
6. Disaggregate data by gender, marital status and age specifically related to HIV and young people so that it can be collected and tracked in order to develop stronger evidence-based programmes and policies.
7. Monitor the implementation of national, regional and global commitments related to young people, sexual and reproductive health and rights and HIV, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and use the information for advocacy and to hold governments accountable.
8. Support young people, especially at risk youth, and demand increased access to sexual and reproductive health services, information and supplies, including male and female condoms, as well as emergency contraception and post exposure prophylaxis.



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9. Remove legal and policy provisions that restrict the freedom of people living with HIV and AIDS in any way; since this is a form of direct discrimination and the effect is counterproductive.

10. Increase research specifically related to HIV and AIDS and youth, as well as programmes and campaigns that address discrimination and stigma, in order to build strong evidence-based programmes and policies.

## Learn More

For more information about the MDGs and young people, please read *Learning to Speak MDGs - 2nd edition* produced by the Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, available for download on our website: [www.youthcoalition.org](http://www.youthcoalition.org).

## Acknowledgements

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## About the Youth Coalition

Youth Coalition is an international organization of young people (ages 15-29 years) committed to promoting adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive rights at the national, regional and international levels. We are students, researchers, lawyers, health care professionals, educators, development workers, and most importantly, we are all dedicated activists.

The Youth Coalition aims to ensure that the sexual and reproductive rights of all young people are respected, guaranteed and promoted, and strives to secure the meaningful participation of young people in decision-making that affects their lives, by advocating, generating knowledge, sharing information, building partnerships and training young activists.

## References

1. For more information about the Millennium Development Goals, please visit the website: <http://www.undp.org/mdg/>
2. UNAIDS: 2008 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic
3. Ibid.
4. Kirby D. *Emerging Answers: Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy*. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2001.
5. Kirby D et al. *Impact of Sex and HIV Education Programs on Sexual Behaviors of Youth in Developing and Developed Countries*. [Youth Research Working Paper, No. 2] Research Triangle Park, NC: Family Health International, 2005.
6. Alford S. *Science and Success, Second Edition: Sex Education and Other Programs that Work to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, HIV & Sexually Transmitted Infections*. Washington, DC: Advocates for Youth, 2008.

7. For more information on Comprehensive Sexuality Education, please read the Youth Coalition factsheet, *The linkages between the MDGs and Comprehensive Sexuality Education*.

8. For more information on ICPD, please visit <http://www.unfpa.org/public/icpd>

9. For more information on the Declaration of Commitment on HIV and AIDS, please visit <http://www.un.org/ga/aids/coverage/FinalDeclarationHIVAIDS.html>

10. 'At risk youth' include but are not limited to young sex workers, young people who use drugs, young men who have sex with men and young women.

