

Universal access

Overview

Universal access is the global commitment to provide HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services to all those in need, based on national targets developed by countries through comprehensive assessments of their epidemics and the obstacles to scaling up national responses, in consultation with civil society, people living with HIV and other country-based partners.

Global commitment to universal access

At the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS) in 2001, countries unanimously endorsed a Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. The declaration set forth time-bound global, regional and national goals for the AIDS response, reflecting growing consciousness of the scale of the epidemic.

In 2005, recognizing that progress was lagging towards these goals, countries and development partners agreed on the urgent need to scale up national efforts to address the AIDS epidemic, leading to a global commitment to moving toward universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.

This move toward universal access was endorsed not only by the UN General Assembly, but also by bodies such as the African Union and the Group of Eight leading industrialized countries (G8).

At the 2006 High Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS at the UN General Assembly in New York, countries signed a Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS that committed UN Member States to pursue the goal of universal access to comprehensive HIV prevention, treatment, care and support programmes by 2010.

Country-led approach

Because each country's AIDS epidemic is different, each country's response must also be unique. In recognition of the need for those affected to guide the AIDS response, countries have developed national plans through consultative processes that engage a range of stakeholders, including civil society and people living with HIV, mapping out the road to an effective and sustainable response.

In early 2006, facilitated by UNAIDS and with backing from the UN, some 130 countries undertook national analyses of the obstacles to accelerated progress towards universal access. These consultations were critical in developing the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS put forth at the High Level Meeting that year. There, countries pledged to develop national targets for key HIV prevention, treatment, care and support interventions and to report on progress.

As of June 2007, 93 countries had established time-bound targets, of which around 60 had developed national strategic plans with clear financial needs assessments. Other countries are in the process of developing and revising plans to scale up towards universal access.

UNAIDS' role

In support of universal access, UNAIDS published an HIV prevention policy framework that recommends policy and programmatic actions essential for a comprehensive, evidence-informed response (UNAIDS, *Intensifying HIV Prevention*, 2005). UNAIDS will continue to support countries in regularly monitoring progress towards universal access, utilising and building on existing monitoring mechanisms established for the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Millennium Development Goals.

In addition, generating progress towards universal access is the linchpin of UNAIDS' workplan. The workplan details specific actions for each UNAIDS Cosponsoring organisation to work with countries to scale up essential programmes.

Focus on funding

Achieving universal access by 2010 will demand an unparalleled expansion of services for HIV prevention, treatment, care and support – and therefore a significant increase in available resources to overcome the many impediments to scale-up.

As part of continuing efforts to track and project resource needs, UNAIDS has published the latest estimates of funding required for the AIDS response, based on individual estimates for 132 low- and middle-income countries and taking into account the most recent available data on the status of the global AIDS epidemic.

See full report on the UNAIDS Web site for more information: www.unaids.org

Contact

Sophie Barton-Knott | UNAIDS Geneva | +41 22 791 1697 | bartonknotts@unaids.org

UNAIDS is an innovative joint venture of the United Nations, bringing together the efforts and resources of the UNAIDS Secretariat and ten UN system organizations in the AIDS response. The Secretariat headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland—with staff on the ground in more than 80 countries. Coherent action on AIDS by the UN system is coordinated in countries through UN theme groups, and joint programmes on AIDS. UNAIDS' Cosponsors include UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank. Visit the UNAIDS Web site at www.unaids.org