

PRESS STATEMENT

UNAIDS calls for zero discrimination and ensuring rights to health, dignity and security on Human Rights Day

GENEVA, 10 December 2012—On the occasion of Human Rights Day, there is evidence that global solidarity and shared responsibility are expanding people's right to health across the world. More than half the people in need of antiretroviral treatment are now receiving it, far fewer people are dying from AIDS-related illnesses, 25 countries have reduced new HIV infections by more than 50% and new HIV treatment and prevention science promise yet more results.

But AIDS is far from over and there are still major challenges to reaching people with life-saving HIV services. People living with HIV have fought for and gained impressive recognition of their right to non-discrimination. However zero discrimination in the response to HIV is far from being achieved. HIV-related discrimination continues to impact the lives of many people living with HIV, and still prevents millions of people from coming forward to test for HIV and access prevention and treatment services.

Effective programmes and protective laws can overcome discrimination and marginalization in the context of HIV. But many of the people most affected by the epidemic remain marginalized and criminalized—sex workers, people who use drugs, men who have sex with men and transgender people. They are unable to benefit from their rights to health, non-discrimination and freedom from violence. As the world strives to achieve zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths, efforts must be doubled to realize the rights of all people affected by HIV.

This International Human Rights Day is dedicated to the principle of inclusion and the right to participate in public life. We need to work to ensure that all members of society have the opportunity to fully realize their rights to health, dignity and security in a world with HIV.

Key elements to ensuring a rights-based approach to HIV include:

- Strong and supportive links to care and treatment must be included in HIV testing programmes;
- Efforts to expand treatment must ensure access to the right medicines at the right time, including second line medicines that in many places remain prohibitively expensive;
- Health systems need to be strengthened to become places of care and support, not denial and discrimination;
- Communities and civil society also need to be strengthened and resourced to work in synergy with health services;

- A wide range of HIV prevention services must be made available, especially to young people who are often denied their rights to information and services about HIV and sexuality;
- Women living with HIV must be able to fully exercise their reproductive and sexual health rights;
- And punitive laws must be replaced by protective ones.

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UNAIDS

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. UNAIDS unites the efforts of 11 UN organizations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank—and works closely with global and national partners to maximize results for the AIDS response. Learn more at unaids.org and connect with us on Facebook and Twitter.