

PRESS STATEMENT

Empowering girls advances HIV response

GENEVA, 11 October 2016—On this International Day of the Girl Child, UNAIDS strongly supports the call by the United Nations for better age- and sex-specific data that can be used to improve the health and well-being of girls aged 10–19 years old.

Discrimination and disadvantage have held back the potential of girls and women for centuries. This generation of girls—an estimated 1.1 billion globally in 2016, the largest in history—has the power to change the world, but only if they can advance their knowledge, agency and freedom to make their own life-defining choices and reach their full potential.

“Girls count! We need to know what counts for girls, to make sure that they start life HIV-free, stay HIV-free or remain AIDS-free,” said UNAIDS Executive Director, Michel Sidibé.

Globally in 2015:

- Around 120 million girls (aged 15–19 years old) worldwide had experienced rape or other forced sexual acts at some point in their lives.
- In high HIV prevalence areas, women exposed to intimate partner violence were 1.5 times more likely to acquire HIV, with child marriage a risk factor for intimate partner violence.
- Almost 1100 adolescent girls and young women (aged 15–24 years old) were newly infected with HIV every day.
- About 70% of adolescent girls and young women (aged 15–24 years old) did not have comprehensive and correct knowledge of HIV.
- HIV, human papillomavirus (HPV) and cervical cancer are strongly linked. Giving HPV vaccine to all girls aged 9 to 13, regardless of HIV status, will prevent cervical cancer in later life.

The bold targets of the 2016 Political Declaration on Ending AIDS that promote the empowerment of women and girls uphold rights and gender equality as central to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. They provide our greatest opportunity to guaranteeing that this generation of girls reach their full potential. The collection and analysis of age- and sex-specific data enriched and informed by the experiences and voices of the world’s girls and young women will put them on the Fast-Track to ending AIDS.

[END]

Contact

UNAIDS Geneva | Charlotte Sector | tel. +41 22 791 5887 | sectorc@unaid.org

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 towards ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. Learn more at [unaids.org](https://www.unaids.org) and connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.