

PRESS RELEASE

UNAIDS warns that HIV-related stigma and discrimination is preventing people from accessing HIV services

New report from UNAIDS gives evidence and highlights best practices on confronting stigma and discrimination to ensure access to health services

GENEVA, 3 October 2017—UNAIDS has released a new report showing how stigma and discrimination is creating barriers to accessing HIV prevention, testing and treatment services and putting lives at risk.

The report, *Confronting discrimination: overcoming HIV-related stigma and discrimination in health-care settings and beyond*, was launched by the Executive Director of UNAIDS, Michel Sidibé, during the Human Rights Council Social Forum. It shows that people living with HIV who experience high levels of HIV-related stigma are more than twice as likely to delay enrolment into care than people who do not perceive HIV-related stigma.

“When people living with, or at risk of, HIV are discriminated against in health-care settings, they go underground. This seriously undermines our ability to reach people with HIV testing, treatment and prevention services,” said Mr Sidibé. “Stigma and discrimination is an affront to human rights and puts the lives of people living with HIV and key populations in danger.”

Often, people living with HIV avoid going to clinics for fear of having their status disclosed or of suffering further stigma and discrimination based on their HIV status. Across 19 countries with available data, one in five people living with HIV avoided going to a clinic or hospital because they feared stigma or discrimination related to their HIV status. When people living with HIV wait until they are very ill before seeking help, they are less likely to respond well to antiretroviral therapy.

The report highlights that these fears are not unfounded. Across 19 countries with available data, one in four people living with HIV have experienced discrimination in health-care settings and one in three women living with HIV have experienced at least one form of discrimination in health-care settings related to their sexual and reproductive health.

Where programmes have been put in place to respond to stigma and discrimination, access to services for HIV prevention, testing and treatment has improved. In one clinic in Namibia, a shift towards integrated health service delivery led to a 20% reduction in deaths among people with HIV.

The report highlights that, in order to reach all people living with, or at risk of, HIV and to link them with HIV prevention and treatment services, the world must step forward and confront discrimination.

The Human Rights Council Social Forum is taking place in Geneva, Switzerland, from 2 to 4 October under the theme of *Promotion and protection of human rights in the context of the HIV epidemic and other communicable diseases and epidemics*.

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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 towards ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. Learn more at unaids.org and connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.