

## PRESS RELEASE

### Fund to help key populations during COVID-19 launched

**GENEVA, 10 December 2020**—UNAIDS announces the launch of its Solidarity Fund, which will support social entrepreneurs and micro-business owned by key populations facing special hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Key populations are among those disproportionately impacted by COVID-19,” said Winnie Byanyima, UNAIDS Executive Director. “COVID-19 has highlighted and exacerbated the profound and widening economic and social inequalities. We must act to support and protect the people who are most impacted by the pandemic.”

Experience from the COVID-19 and HIV pandemics, and from other diseases, such as Ebola, has shown that key populations are more likely to be impacted by food insecurity, face barriers to health care and access to medicines, and suffer losses of livelihood, unemployment, homelessness and domestic violence.

Launched today, Human Rights Day, the new Solidarity Fund will support social entrepreneurs and small-scale businesses owned by people living with HIV, women or members of key populations, including sex workers, transgender people, people who use drugs and gay men and other men who have sex with men, the people who so often have their human rights violated.

“The fund will help bridge the gap between aspirations and opportunities of people from my community. It places trust and gives us a chance to show our innovation and entrepreneurship with no limitations,” said Maite Schneider, the cofounder and Chief Executive Officer of TransEmprego.

To be piloted initially in five countries—Brazil, Ghana, India, Madagascar and Uganda—with a US\$ 250 000 budget from UNAIDS, the initiative will scale up to additional countries over the coming months, with a goal of raising an additional US\$ 3 million to US\$ 5 million in 2021–2022.

UNAIDS will closely work with community networks, national innovation ecosystems, the private sector and other partners to create tailored support, especially capacity development on social entrepreneurship and mentoring to enhance the sustainability of social ventures and impact for the wider community, with special attention given to young key populations.

Among the partners is the venture development and investment platform Social Alpha, which will provide mentoring and entrepreneur support to the chosen beneficiaries. “We look forward to partner with communities and UNAIDS on the Solidarity Fund and leverage our experience in working with social entrepreneurs for solving complex social, economic and environmental challenges,” said Manoj Kumar, the Chief Executive Officer and founder of Social Alpha.

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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](http://unaids.org) and connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.