

UNAIDS STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

UNAIDS STRATEGY REVIEW: Focus Group Synthesis template

Country: Switzerland, Global

Organizer: Young UN @ UNAIDS

Date: 23 September 2020

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UNAIDS STRATEGY REVIEW: Focus Group Synthesis template

Please use the template to organize your feedback from the session. Please keep responses succinct and as clear as possible to ensure our synthesis is a reflection of the focus groups hosted.

You can enter your report directly into a form on SurveyMonkey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3HC9Q6M>

If you are not able to enter it on line you can send us a copy via e-mail strategyteam@unids.org

Would you accept for UNAIDS to make your report publicly available: Yes

SECTION 1: Information about the focus group (to be completed by host of Focus Group)

Organization leading discussion: Young UN chapter in UNAIDS

Date of discussion: 23 September 2020

Theme to be discussed: Youth Engagement in the new Global AIDS Strategy beyond 2021

Types of organizations participating:

15 participants from 5 UN organizations; UNICEF, UNITAID, UNFPA, WHO, UNAIDS. All participants working at HQ level in their respective organizations.

Country, regional or global focus: Global (FGD originally open for country, regional and global level representatives but participants finally attending from global level only)

Introducing the theme

Please enter the main characteristics of the theme being explored in 5 sentences (please share the presentation if possible by email)

- Despite the promising decline by 47% in new HIV infections among young people (15–24 years) since 2000, the world is far short of the global goal of less than 100 000 new HIV infections per year by 2020 with 460 000 young people alone newly infected in 2019, and 3 400 000 young people living with HIV.
- More must be done to ensure robust, equitable access to HIV prevention, treatment and support services that are youth-friendly, while also reaching and engaging adolescent and youth members of key populations (sex workers, gay men and other men who have sex with men, transgender people, people who use drugs and people in prisons) who face additional barriers to access services, including stigma, discrimination and criminalization.

- While several strategic actions and delivery approaches have been embraced by the current UNAIDS 2016-2021 Strategy on the Fast Track to End AIDS to reinforce youth movements and to empower youth to meaningfully engage in HIV programming, the persistent under-prioritization of youth engagement has undermined the right of young people to participate in HIV-related decision-making to inform HIV responses that address their needs and priorities.
- The process to develop the new Global AIDS Strategy beyond 2021 presents a unique opportunity for Young UN @ UNAIDS, a platform for entry to mid-level staff to collectively shape the future of the organization, revamp corporate values and culture, to engage with other Young UN members across UNAIDS Cosponsors and other partners to identify priorities and make tangible recommendations on the role of young people across the Joint Programme in the design, implementation and monitoring of the next AIDS Strategy.

SECTION 2: People-centered response to HIV – key emerging messages

Please enter the main messages coming out, up to 5 points maximum per section

REACHING THE PERSON	
How do we see the current situation?	<p>There is a lack of meaningful opportunities for young people to engage and shape programmes to better reach other young people in need of services especially in rural areas where opportunities for networking, peer-to-peer support and empowerment are reduced. Young people cannot inherit systems they did not co-design. They need to work together to co-create initiatives to address HIV and young people need to be seen as allies instead of beneficiaries, made accountable, and be put in the lead.</p> <p>Young people in their diversity are underrepresented at decision-making level globally, regionally and locally within organizations where their voices could be heard. At global level, this also includes the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board where young people are currently absent. This particularly applies to youth furthest left behind who are confronted with intersecting vulnerabilities, yet they often do not have a constituency to speak up for them.</p> <p>Inter-generational co-leadership and dialogues and platforms are an exception. They should be further developed for more experienced staff to exchange with and/or mentor less experienced staff to create an empowering environment. There is a general feeling that the opinion of UN staff under 40 years is not given the credibility it deserves. This is particularly problematic when the issues addressed are related to the needs of young people.</p> <p>In many countries, complacency of youth to get infected with HIV is worrying.</p>
What concerns us?	<p>Young people have most often been included as a tokenistic aspect of programming, not as a real active and impactful part of it.</p> <p>Stigma and discrimination of young people, criminalization of same sex relationships, HIV status or age of consent laws often create barriers to access services. At the same time, it may inhibit young people to meaningfully engage in platforms and decision-making fora that concern them.</p> <p>Mental health issues of young people have not yet been incorporated into the global HIV response, including interventions related to gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). This should be done as a matter of priority and the importance of youth highlighted in upcoming guidance on integrating mental health issues in the HIV response.</p>
What gives us hope?	<p>Innovations such as self-testing can be promising tools to break down access barriers for youth and improve service delivery. Youth-developed and led innovations regarding service delivery and support, such as social media</p>

	<p>based interventions that inform about youth- and key population-friendly services and locations, are an opportunity to reach young people.</p> <p>The motivation and willingness of young UN staff to create platforms driven by Young UN gives us hope. Young people internally in the UN are convening and representing youth voices, which can be further strengthened and improved by creating dialogue, sharing learning and expertise with other colleagues. It is key that young staff members co-create initiatives to address HIV (e.g. adolescent girls and young women Education Plus Initiative).</p> <p>Possibility to strengthen youth representation within multilateral organizations. Youth movements have been getting stronger with an increase in the number of youth leaders and organizations involved in the HIV response. Hence, young people should not only be regarded as beneficiaries but also as allies, who are made accountable, and put in the lead, as they have tools to use, they have digital power and knowledge of issues they are facing.</p>
<p>What constrains our ability to achieve our goals?</p>	<p>General services and delivery approaches do not respond to the needs of young people. To maximize impact, the new strategy should therefore reflect nuanced approaches and flexibilities.</p> <p>Inconsistent inclusion of youth on multiple platforms, including global decision-making fora, and the lack of empowering youth leaders inhibits young voices to be heard and taken into account. When there is inclusion of youth, delegitimization of youth expertise and experience often contributes to youth voices not being given adequate weight and hinders responding to young people’s cross-sectoral needs.</p>

<p>THE STRUCTURES THAT RESPOND TO HIV</p>	
<p>How do we see the current situation?</p>	<p>Many regulations at country level are limiting youth in their own decision-making in terms of health. Due to age of consent laws they often need a guardian to make the decision for them or agree, hindering proactive access and use of services.</p>
<p>What concerns us?</p>	<p>There is a lack of integration of comprehensive services (e.g. education and health sector interventions).</p> <p>Decision making spaces are not inclusive of youth voices in all their diversity, including at the PCB.</p> <p>Young people are excluded as community gatekeepers in implementation plans. For example, this applies to young medical practitioners especially pharmacists and young midwives who are the community “go-to” people especially for youth in quickly accessing health services.</p>

	<p>There is limited flexibility of UN agencies to partner with youth networks/organizations as they are often less formally structured/registered. Working with youth-led networks would enhance the UN's ability to reach the target group in a more relatable and efficient way (as compared to working with the bigger NGOs/CSOs).</p> <p>The lack of funding to support young people's engagement in programming (design, implementation, monitoring, etc) is of great concern as well as the lack of accountability from all sectors/actors to meaningfully engage young people and establish feedback mechanisms.</p> <p>The complicated and bureaucratic processes hinder multilateral organisations to partner/work with youth organizations.</p>
<p>What gives us hope?</p>	<p>The commitment of the Joint Programme to work more closely with youth organisations.</p> <p>The growing worldwide activism of young people and the opportunity to capitalize upon.</p> <p>The enhanced inclusion of youth voices in dedicated fora during international events as an important entry point for engagement and networking (e.g. AIDS 2020 Youth Forum).</p> <p>The global connection and dialogue among today's youth. Partly due to COVID-19 but already before, the virtual world gives possibilities to communicate across the globe. With the advent of social media, it also allows for advocacy efforts and mobilization from youth.</p> <p>The power of peer-education/exchange has been recognized as a strong approach for HIV programming.</p>
<p>What constrains our ability to achieve our goals?</p>	<p>Business as usual creates a barrier to changing attitudes and innovation. Consequently, there is a need to positively disrupt current ways of working (business "unusual").</p> <p>There is a lack of youth engagement in monitoring and evaluation and insufficient data collection around young people. Further, young people are not sufficiently engaged in data collection themselves, and sharing of data analyses with young people to strengthen accountability and inform advocacy and programming is limited.</p> <p>There is a lack of available positions and recruitment of young people within the UN system, which delegitimizes their expertise and experience. This particularly applies to career opportunities for young people from high burden countries and key affected populations. Their specific experiences and knowledge could enrich the way of working as the Joint Programme.</p>

CONTEXTUAL ENVIRONMENT	
How do we see the current situation?	There is a lack of platforms that include youth systematically and in all their diversity, especially for decision-making. Conversations continue with the same groups over and over again instead of reaching those hardly reached.
What concerns us?	Where progressive policies exist, their practical implementation is lagging behind.
What gives us hope?	<p>Youth as allies rather than beneficiaries. There are experiences of inter-generational (two-way) accountabilities: giving youth responsibilities to lead the response themselves. There are internal UN experiences such as reversed mentoring where senior staff take a younger mentor. These experiences give hope for change to come.</p> <p>Youth being more vocal. Globally, youth seems to be more vocal and feeling more empowered to claim their rights. This can also be seen at organizational level where youth is more actively organizing themselves and trying to contribute to processes/decisions, such as through Young UN at UN globally and through chapters within different organizations.</p>
What constrains our ability to achieve our goals?	<p>Commitments not translating to action.</p> <p>Growing criticism of multilateralism inhibits the creation of enabling spaces for engagement, including for young people.</p> <p>Backlash against key populations, including young key populations, is worsening in many parts of the world which affects meaningful engagement and addressing their specific needs.</p>

EMERGING PATTERNS:

- The new strategy is an opportunity for youth empowerment and inclusion in decision-making as well as programming. In the HIV response, young people have been active in terms of using their voice and should have a place at the table of decision making at global, regional and country level– to be treated as equal constituents (before, during and after) and be more vocal about what works for them and what does not.
- Leverage on enhanced youth activism globally and the interest of young people in driving change to provide better career development paths for young people. In particular for the Joint Programme, recruitment processes should be strengthened in a way to allow more diverse staffing, including young people from high burden countries and key affected populations.
- Opportunities and need to create more inter-generational dialogue as a two-way exchange of learnings and experiences between young and senior staff through existing and new platforms and using Young UN as an entry point.

SECTION 3: RECOMMENDATIONS World Café

Please enter the main messages coming out, up to 5 points maximum per section

What are the key recommendations back to UNAIDS in terms of the strategy specifically?	
CONTINUE	<p><i>What is working that we must continue to do?</i></p> <p>Take AIDS out of isolation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate and leverage the HIV response with SRHR, economic empowerment, and the wider development agenda to better understand their broader impact on risk and vulnerability of young people to HIV. • Fully leverage opportunities and the power of the Joint Programme to raise youth voices and to better integrate priorities. • Facilitate the creation of inclusive dialogues to address multiple diseases and underlying issues. <p>Support and expand what is working for youth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand support to youth organizations (financial, technical, and advocacy related support). • Keep investing in youth leadership. • Include youth in internal and external working groups as well as in inter-agency platforms. <p>Reduce barriers to youth access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to advocate for the removal of legal barriers to accessing services. • Advocate for continued cultural and political transformation both within countries and the Joint Programme. <p>Push for normative change (inclusive of addressing challenges for youth engagement)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to position minorities and vulnerable groups at the forefront of programming. The HIV field seems to be a strong promoter of youth engagement, but this is often tokenistic and set up in separate groups instead of systematically integrating youth into existing advisory/expert groups. <p>Keep holistic people-centred approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The HIV response traditionally looks at the person holistically, including aspects of physical and mental health, and from the perspective of multiple sectors that have an impact on the risks and vulnerabilities of a person to HIV. This should also be considered in the prioritization of services for young people.
STOP	<p><i>What must we stop doing, that if we don't stop will ensure failure?</i></p> <p>Tokenizing youth involvement - From programming for to programming with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We should stop seeing young people as beneficiaries and shift our mindset from programming for young people to programming with young people.

	<p>Delegitimizing expertise/experience of young people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We must stop undermining the importance of the expertise young people can bring to decision-making platforms, including within UN agencies, and especially when it comes to discussions about their own well-being. <p>Engaging only established/known youth leaders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We should be aware of whom we consult and ensure diversity in the groups we invite and ask for input, as they should not always be the same groups/people, but rather representatives for those hardly reached. We should make the effort to ensure a consultative process to work for them, not for them to fit into our consultative process.
<p>START</p>	<p><i>What are we not doing that we have to start doing?</i></p> <p>Data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need to strengthen the collection, analysis and dissemination of data regarding young people (particularly regarding disaggregation by gender, age and sub-populations) to better understand their distinct needs and priorities. • Review the definitions of adolescents and youth, including in relevant indicators, and standardize them across organizations. <p>From rhetoric to action for inclusive structures for programming and decision-making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematically include youth voices in programming and decision-making from global to regional to country level. • Create the position of a Youth Envoy on HIV to challenge the Joint Programme on its approach towards youth engagement. • Allow youth to actively participate in decision making and put forward observable and measurable actions. • Include youth voices in the PCB (Youth-led NGO Delegation) as well as in regional and country level decision-making. • Create inclusive dialogues rather than separate platforms (like this FGD) where youth discusses among youth the best approaches to reach young people, but rather opt and create opportunities for exchange. • Young people's skills to self-organize using innovative platforms are a good entry point to bridge socio-cultural differences between generations. <p>Hire and give responsibilities to lead for young people across agencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be more agile, flexible and innovative in our ways of working with young people - if we consult and collaborate with them to design service delivery and outreach, there will be more ownership and impact. • Acknowledge the true value-added and expertise that young people have and turn it into opportunities for young people to get involved. • Hire young people to design, implement and innovate HIV programmes. <p>Make participation of youth part of framework and accountability structures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen financing of youth-led organisations and approaches.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set clear accountability structures for stakeholders to engage young people - including indicators, budgets, etc.
<p>What is the one key recommendation you want to reiterate for strong consideration?</p>	<p><i>Making youth and other constituencies more accountable towards each other with regards to youth participation through a target in the next strategy that aims at youth inclusion in processes for programming and decision-making.</i></p> <p><i>Explore the opportunity to create the position of a Youth Envoy on HIV to challenge the Joint Programme on its approach towards youth engagement and work with young people across the Joint Programme to influence decision-making and programming.</i></p>

Please share with us any references you think would be useful for the Strategy Development, such as examples of case studies that illustrate the challenges or recommendations you outlined in the discussion report.

Please also share a list of names and email addresses of participants who would wish to continue to be informed of the Strategy development process. Note names and contacts will not be shared publicly or with any third party.

You can send us additional documents via e-mail strategyteam@unaid.org

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