

# FAST-TRACK:

Ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 as a  
part of the Sustainable Development Goals


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PRINCESS TESSY OF LUXEMBOURG

UNAIDS Global Advocate for Young Women and Adolescent Girls

*Empowering a new generation of young women and adolescent girls*





*“My interest in the AIDS response was sparked by the fact that HIV affects each of us. And we all have power to end this epidemic and to ensure everyone is able to live with dignity and respect—especially when it comes to young women and adolescent girls. Today, all of the elements, such as research, awareness, knowledge and resources, have to be brought together to give us the best chance of succeeding.”*

**PRINCESS TESSY OF LUXEMBOURG**



#### Q&A WITH PRINCESS TESSY

**F**rom her experience with the Luxembourg Army, background in education, psychology and international diplomacy, and as a mother of two young children, Princess Tessa brings a unique perspective to her work with UNAIDS.

*Why would you like to reach young women and adolescent girls—what is your hope for the next generation of female leaders?*

All around the world young women and adolescent girls are coming into their own voices. And we need to respect their voices. This message needs to reach across borders through girls' education and investing in programmes for gender equality. This work has to be done beside young men and adolescent boys. Respect is earned through our individual actions, not by our gender, and everyone deserves to live with dignity. Let's work together in order to make the future a future for all.

*You have a very interesting background. What made you interested in working with UNAIDS?*

My background is unique in two very different ways. On one side there is the adventurer who hopes to change the world, and on the other side there is a mother and a wife who knows what responsibility signifies. Both parts of my personality are fundamental to achieving positive change in small but meaningful ways. Long-term change is what I am interested in and this can only be achieved with small steps. The AIDS response is a long-term solution. This satisfies both my realistic ambitions as well as my ambitions of taking part in great change.

*Did you know?*

After she joined the Army, Princess Tessy obtained a licence to drive lorries and armoured Humvees and she volunteered to take part in the United Nations Mission in Kosovo as part of the BELUKOS 13/15 detachment, in which she was the only female member.

## AWARENESS TO ACTION

When young women and adolescent girls are empowered to make life-defining choices, it not only changes the course of their own lives but also those of their families, communities and societies.

Globally, women represent about 50% of all people living with HIV. Among young people, however, important differences emerge. While new HIV infections are declining overall, the impact of new HIV infections is still disproportionately felt by young women.

This picture becomes even starker in younger age groups and in certain regions. For example, 56% of all new HIV infections among 15–24-year-olds and 62% of new HIV infections among 15–19-year-olds were among women in 2014.

The disproportionate impact of HIV on young women and adolescent girls goes well beyond their health status. Women acquire HIV on average five to seven years earlier than men, and this has a much larger impact on their opportunity to develop skills, assets and resilience.

Although progress has been made in achieving gender parity in education and political representation, many challenges remain before women and girls achieve gender equality. Every day, around 41 000 girls are married before they reach the age of 18. Complications linked to pregnancy and childbirth remain the second leading cause of death among adolescent girls aged 15–19, and it has been estimated that around 120 million girls worldwide have experienced rape or other forced sexual acts at some point in their lives.

Gender-based violence and a lack of control over decisions affecting their own lives, including over key aspects of sexuality and reproduction, increase the risk of HIV infection among adolescent girls and young women. Around 350 000 adolescent girls and young women were newly infected with HIV in 2014.

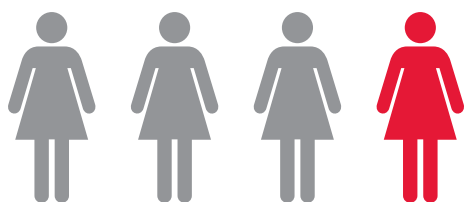
The reasons for the inequalities are intricately woven into the sociocultural, economic and political fabric of our societies, and these stack the odds against girls from birth. Multisectoral responses are required for adolescent girls and boys to ensure equal access to education, including age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education, and to bolster social protection programmes. Also needed are to integrate

age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health services and to expand programmes to address gender-based violence. Innovative partnerships, such as Together for Girls, All In and DREAMS, will be crucial to highlight and respond to the specific needs of young women and adolescent girls.

Seizing the historic opportunity of the new Sustainable Development Goals, the global community must commit to policies and actions that protect, support and empower young women and adolescent girls. This is what will redefine the role of young women and adolescent girls, strengthening the AIDS response and making possible the end of the AIDS epidemic by 2030.

### Young women need control of their own health

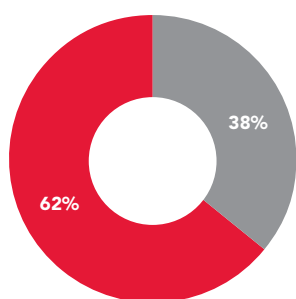
In the majority of sub-Saharan African countries, less than 75% of young women report having a final say in decisions about their own health care.



Source: Demographic and Health Surveys, 2006–2014.

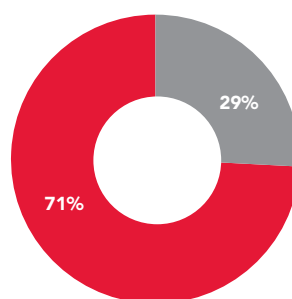
### Distribution of the 220 000 new HIV infections among adolescents globally in 2014 by sex

Proportion of new HIV infections among adolescents that are among adolescent girls, global



■ Female ■ Male

Proportion of new HIV infections among adolescents that are among adolescent girls, sub-Saharan Africa



■ Female ■ Male

Source: UNAIDS, 2014 estimates.

# FIVE ACTIONS FOR YOUNG WOMEN AND ADOLESCENT GIRLS

## 01

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*Renew political commitment for gender equality, women's rights and empowerment.*

## 02

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*Close the funding gap, ensuring investments for gender equality are reaching the young women and adolescent girls most affected.*

## 03

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*Revitalize the platform for advocacy for young women and adolescent girls.*

## 04

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*Enhance the availability of evidence that takes into account the different dimensions of gender inequalities.*

## 05

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*Ensure responsive programmes from adolescence to adulthood.*





*“Princess Tessy is making a difference in the world. Her capacity to connect with people and issues gives her a powerful platform to advocate for solutions of lasting change. Her voice will amplify the importance of empowering young women and adolescent girls to reach their dreams and their full potential.”*

**MICHEL SIDIBÉ, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, UNAIDS**

# 880 million

THE GLOBAL NUMBER OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN AGED 15–24

# 2.3 million

THE GLOBAL NUMBER OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN AGED 15–24 LIVING WITH HIV

# 620 000

THE NUMBER OF NEW HIV INFECTIONS AMONG ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 15–24

# 56%

PERCENTAGE OF ALL NEW HIV INFECTIONS AMONG 15–24-YEAR-OLDS AMONG WOMEN

All data from end of 2014.

*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. Learn more at [unaids.org](http://unaids.org) and connect with us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.*