
FOLLOW-UP TO THE THEMATIC SEGMENT FROM THE 50TH PCB MEETING

**Positive learning: Harnessing
the power of education to end
HIV related stigma and
discrimination, empower young
people and provide a
comprehensive HIV response**



Background to the 50th PCB Thematic Segment

- A PCB working group was established to support and guide preparations for the thematic segment, including providing technical inputs and strategic advice on (1) the background paper, (2) collection of country best practice case studies, (3) the agenda, and (4) the speakers for the session.
- Of note was the participation of young people as part of the Working Group members.

Background to the 50th PCB Thematic Segment

The thematic segment, which was hybrid in nature, brought together diverse participants from all regions of the world and included:

- Political and global leaders in education and health
- Young people
- Civil society and community experts
- Government representatives
- Joint Programme leaders
- Implementing partners

During the session, speakers provided reflections and examples that stressed the relevance of the recommendations included in the thematic segment's background note. These recommendations inform the PCB's upcoming decisions.

Key messages from the Thematic Segment

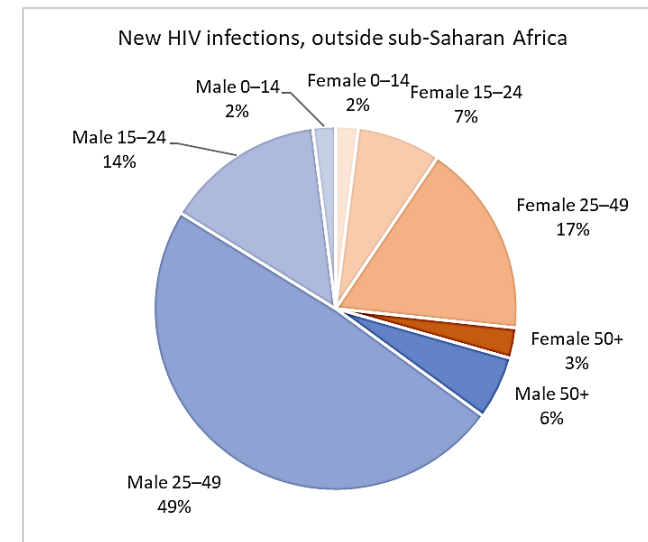
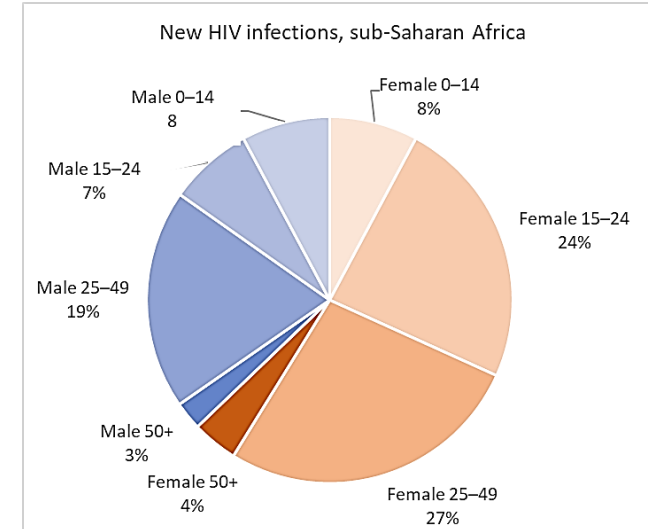
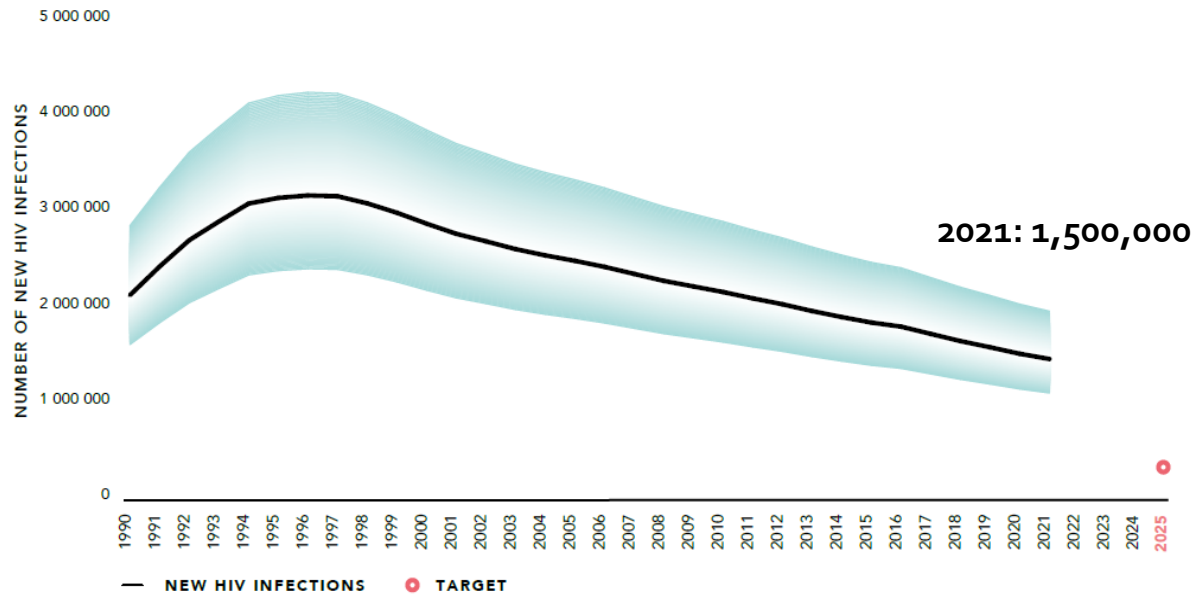
Background

- Inequalities - including those related to education, wealth, race, migration, sexual orientation, gender inequality and gender identity - drive HIV transmission, fuel stigma, and affect whether people living with HIV can access support and services, and the benefits they draw from these.
- Due to these inequalities, new infections are largely concentrated in key populations globally (men who have sex with men, transgender people, people who inject drugs and sex workers and their clients), and young women and adolescent girls in Sub Saharan Africa.

The Data

In 2021, 1.5 million people were newly infected with HIV

New HIV infections, global, 1990-2021 and 2025 target



The Data

- The data show that adolescents and youth continue to be left behind. Globally, HIV still disproportionately impacts young people (aged 15-24 years), who represent 16% of the global population, but account for approximately 27% of all new HIV infections. An estimated 3.3 million young people were living with HIV in 2020.
- Gender disparities are evident. Adolescent girls and young women (15-24 years old):
 - represent one in five of the people acquiring HIV globally.
 - in sub-Saharan Africa, they are **three times more likely** to acquire HIV than their male peers.
 - 6 in 7 new cases of HIV among adolescents in the region are among girls.
 - represented 85% of new infections of HIV among this population group in sub-Saharan Africa, and 14% of all people in the world who acquired HIV.

The Commitments

- Ending inequalities is the central theme of the **Global AIDS Strategy 2021-2026** and the **2021 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: Ending Inequalities and Getting on Track to End AIDS by 2030**.
- Bold new global commitments and targets for 2025 focus attention on the people and communities in greatest need of HIV services. The *Global AIDS Strategy* uses an inequalities lens to identify, reduce and end inequalities that represent barriers to people living with and affected by HIV, preventing countries and communities from ending AIDS.
- The *Political Declaration* commits to “Strengthening the role of the education sector as an entry point for HIV knowledge and awareness, prevention, testing and treatment, and ending stigma and discrimination, in addition to its role in addressing the social, economic and structural factors that perpetuate inequalities and increase HIV risk”.

Key messages

- Young people's knowledge and awareness of HIV and their access to and use of essential HIV-related services remain unacceptably low, and condom use is on the decline. The proportion of young people living with HIV who know their HIV status is much lower than for their adult counterparts.
- Unequal gender power dynamics and gender-based violence continue to put adolescent girls and young women at high risk of acquiring HIV and dying from AIDS related illnesses.
- Their risks of acquiring HIV and the challenges in accessing services are enormous, fueled by intersecting forms of stigma and discrimination, economic, cultural and legal barriers.

Key messages

- Human rights-related barriers to access, uptake and retention in HIV and other health services remain as key drivers of vulnerability to HIV infection and to its impact on the lives of those living with HIV.
- HIV-related stigma and discrimination are persistent barriers to addressing the AIDS epidemic, restricting access to prevention, testing and treatment services for those most at risk.
- **Education - in school and out of school -** can play a key role in addressing these inequalities, reducing HIV transmission as well as HIV-related stigma and discrimination. It supports adolescents and young learners including those living with HIV and from key populations, to fulfil their right to education in a safe, supportive, inclusive and enabling learning environment.

Education as a strategic entry point for ending AIDS by 2030

- Education is one of the best HIV prevention tools available. Each additional year of secondary schooling can lead to:
 - a reduction in the cumulative risk of HIV infection, in particular among adolescent girls and young women in sub-Saharan Africa.
 - reductions in child marriage and adolescent childbearing
 - increased prospects for securing jobs and higher incomes as adult women; improving their countries' prospects for advancing poverty reduction, gender equality, stability and economic prosperity
 - ending AIDS as a public health threat.

Education as a strategic entry point for ending AIDS by 2030

The evidence is there about what works:

- Completion of secondary education
- Comprehensive sexuality education
- Sexual and reproductive health and rights
- Psychosocial support, mental health and harm reduction
- Young people's participation and leadership
- Multisectoral approaches and linkages between sectors can all reduce transmission as well as stigma faced by people living with HIV, girls, young women, and key populations.

The Way Forward

Recognizing the importance of the education sector in HIV prevention, testing and treatment as well as in the fight against HIV stigma and discrimination requires:

- Promoting youth leadership and meaningful participation, in particularly that of youth living with HIV, adolescent girls, and key populations, in co-creating, implementing and monitoring of high-impact interventions in the education sector.
- Improving granular data collection disaggregated by sex and intersecting characteristics to better understand educational participation, progression and learning, and use gender-sensitive data for policymaking and planning while recognizing national capacity.
- Supporting and empowering girls and key populations to remain in the education system and to complete quality secondary education.

The Way Forward

- Developing and scaling up access to and delivery of high-quality comprehensive sexuality education, that includes scientifically accurate information on HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.
- Scaling up policy and programmes to end HIV-related stigma, discrimination, bullying (including cyber-bullying) & violence in education settings.
- Connecting health, education, and social service systems and other support mechanisms and positioning schools as an entry point to providing gender-responsive support, protection, and referrals for adolescents and young people living with and impacted by HIV, while ensuring that alternative mechanisms are in place to address the needs of young people who are out of school.

The Way Forward

- Linking education sector HIV policies and programmes with adolescents' and young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).
- Increasing domestic resource mobilization including innovative, sustainable and equitable financing to enlarge fiscal space to accommodate increased investment in the education sector.
- Mobilizing partners and key stakeholders including the private sector to support government efforts to provide fee-free education to keep girls in school and prevent HIV infection.



Thank you
