

MESSAGE FROM UNAIDS REGIONAL OFFICE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN ON
INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY 2016

August 12th, 2016

UNAIDS celebrates International Youth Day 2016 by recognising the vigorous and very much needed work that the new generation of leaders, who participate in the HIV response in Latin America and the Caribbean, is doing in order to achieve a future free of AIDS by 2030.

Young women and men from Latin America and the Caribbean have positioned themselves as key actors in the HIV response at global, regional and country level. They are amplifying the voice of the youth to decision-making spaces and raising the visibility of their needs for HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.

According to UNAIDS, 210000 young people between 15-24 years old were living with HIV in Latin America and the Caribbean but many more do not know their HIV status. With 35000 new HIV infections, young people accounted for one third of all new HIV infections in the region.

Although there has been great progress in the inclusion and participation of young women and men in the HIV response, there is still a significant gap in access of adolescent and youth-friendly integrated HIV and health services.

In 2015 UNAIDS, UNICEF and UNFPA published a regional analysis of legislation and policies that affect adolescents and young people's access to HIV and sexual and reproductive health services in Latin America. The analysis showed that parental or legal guardian consent is still required in order to get an HIV test or know the results in 9 out of 17 countries.

In the Caribbean a few countries have developed policies allowing minors to access HIV testing without parental consent, either allowing it at any age (such as in Guyana) or above the age of 14 (as in Trinidad and Tobago). However all the other countries maintain restrictions on access to HIV testing based on age.

UNAIDS encourages the engagement of young people to act as agents of change and key leaders in the HIV response.

UNAIDS will continue to support the strengthening of organizational and leadership capacities of young women and men in the HIV response; and it will also continue advocating for the inclusion and visibility of social determinants and the removal of barriers that limit the access to HIV and health services by the youth.