

Prevent HIV in adolescents

An investment opportunity
for the private sector

The opportunity

Across the world, especially in Africa and in many lower- and middle-income countries, population growth has led to a youth bulge, offering societies great opportunities and possibilities for economic growth. Adolescents can bring hope for future progress and development – if they are healthy, educated and gainfully employed in adulthood. One key to adolescents' health and productivity is keeping them free from AIDS and HIV infection.

A world where AIDS is no longer a public health threat is certainly within reach: ending AIDS by 2030 is a clear aim of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). And SDG 17 on global partnership for sustainable development provides an opportunity for the private sector to contribute to this endeavour. Involvement of the private sector is critical – indeed, the progress made so far to tackle HIV cannot be sustained without it. Intensified efforts require the expertise, innovation and financial resources of a range of partners so entire societies and economies can benefit from healthy, empowered and more productive individuals, families and communities.

The challenges

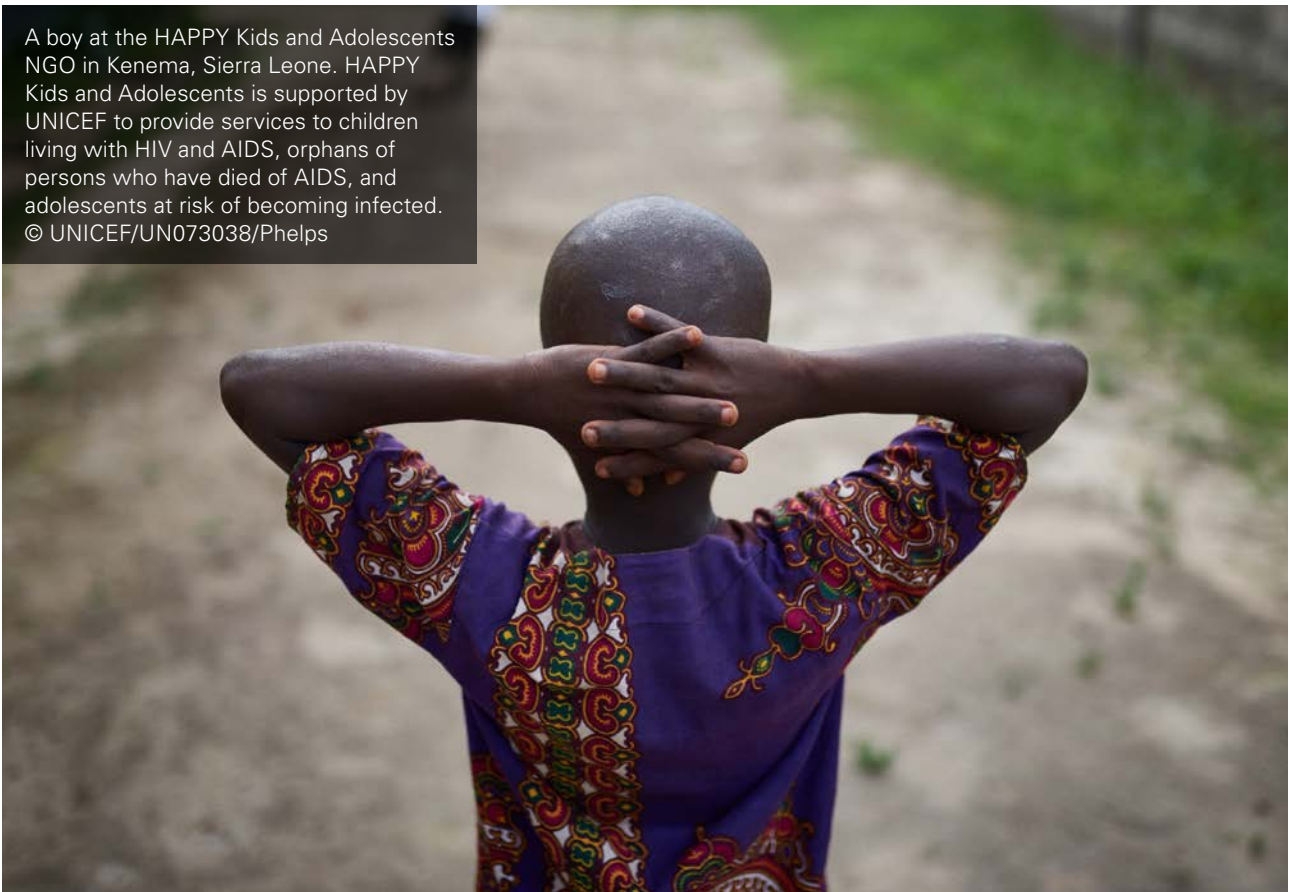
Despite progress made globally in the fight against AIDS, the global community has not succeeded in reducing the rate of infection among adolescents at the same rate as among adults – the rate of progress, in fact, is three times slower. In some parts of the world, such as in sub-Saharan Africa, AIDS is the leading cause of death in this age group.

To make an AIDS-free future a reality, the global community must tackle the following challenges.

Reaching the hardest to reach and helping them determine their HIV status

In areas where the rates of HIV infection are highest, the hardest to reach are usually socially and economically disadvantaged groups without access to health care and education, and with limited awareness of HIV infection and testing. The most recent data indicate that only 22 per cent of adolescent girls and 16 per cent of adolescent boys aged 15–19 in Eastern and Southern Africa – the region most affected by HIV – were tested for HIV in the past 12 months and received the result of the last test. The testing rates in West and Central Africa and South Asia are even lower.

A boy at the HAPPY Kids and Adolescents NGO in Kenema, Sierra Leone. HAPPY Kids and Adolescents is supported by UNICEF to provide services to children living with HIV and AIDS, orphans of persons who have died of AIDS, and adolescents at risk of becoming infected.
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THE SITUATION

- An estimated **1.6 million** adolescents (aged 10–19 years) were living with HIV worldwide in 2018. Three in five (68 per cent or nearly 7 in 10) lived in eastern and southern Africa.
- There were **250,000** new HIV infections among adolescents in 2018. In sub-Saharan Africa, nearly three times as many adolescent girls were infected as boys. A girl becomes infected with HIV every four minutes in sub-Saharan Africa.
- **33,000** AIDS-related deaths among adolescents (10–19 years old) are expected in 2019.
- New adolescent HIV infections will rise by **13 per cent** by 2030 unless action is taken now.

<<https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Global-snapshot-2018.pdf>>

Source: UNAIDS 2019 estimates

Ensuring adolescents who test negative stay negative

Staying negative requires people to test for HIV. However, many do not test due to fears of social discrimination and stigma, and a lack of access to regular, simple testing. They also lack access to information, education and peer support.

Empowering adolescent girls to avoid infection

Adolescent girls account for 74 per cent of all infections – this is nearly 4 out of 5 of all HIV infections in the 15–19 age group worldwide. Girls and young women are not empowered to avoid being infected with HIV – which often happens in exploitative relationships with older male partners. They need support if living with HIV and ways to avoid passing on the infection to new partners or to their children.



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UNICEF’s track record

UNICEF has more than 70 years of experience. It works in over 190 countries, where it addresses the health, nutrition, education and protection needs of more of the world’s children than any other organization. With a proven track record in partnering effectively with the private sector, UNICEF achieves sustainable results for children and adolescents.

UNICEF works in the most challenging and least accessible places, reaching children – including adolescents – in both emergency and development contexts. To address the HIV/AIDS epidemic, UNICEF invests in communities and partnerships and in the most effective solutions and interventions to end AIDS and make improvements to current health systems. UNICEF has a voice in the most important global and national conversations affecting children and is a key contributor to many global alliances that tackle the most pressing issues.

UNICEF TARGETS FOR 2021

81 per cent of adolescents living with HIV receive antiretroviral therapy

13.8 million adolescent girls and 9.8 million adolescent boys tested for HIV and received result of last test

25 countries taking initiatives to strengthen the availability of gender-responsive evidence for prevention of HIV

32 countries supporting implementation of at least three high-impact gender-responsive adolescent prevention interventions

UNICEF’s sustainable response

UNICEF’s mandate is to save children’s lives, defend their rights and help them fulfil their potential from early childhood through adolescence. Partnerships are key in fulfilling UNICEF’s mandate, with governments, civil society and the private sector, and with children and adolescents themselves.

Business as usual is not enough to make the final push towards ending AIDS. UNICEF and its partners, therefore, implement innovative interventions that will reach children everywhere and leave no child behind. This means focusing on long-term solutions to prevent

future transmission of HIV while treating those living with the virus today. UNICEF's approach varies in different communities and reflects the situation of each context. The proportion of people with HIV, the capacity of the health system and the level of support available from private and public bodies all influence the type of response.

UNICEF's approach to addressing the HIV epidemic adapts interventions to the needs of all adolescents affected by the virus. UNICEF looks to integrate prevention, treatment and care strategies for HIV and AIDS into existing national, regional and community health care systems so the maximum number of adolescents can be reached. UNICEF always tries to develop approaches that work today as well as in the future.

UNICEF is continually looking for more game-changing solutions to end AIDS among adolescents. Overall, UNICEF supports a 4T approach – 'target, test, treat and train' – for youth at risk of HIV infection. This approach seeks to improve their health and well-being and to assure their survival and healthy transition to productive adulthoods free from poverty, discrimination and exclusion.

1 Tailoring interventions to contexts

Different groups of adolescents require different approaches to prevention. UNICEF uses high-tech data collection methods to help understand the situation of specific adolescent populations and learn how to reach them at the right time, in the right place and with the right combination of approaches to meet their needs. Along with its partners, UNICEF aims to improve prevention programmes so they target and identify hidden, invisible and hard-to-reach populations – for example, by mapping adolescents' personal networks and through champions in adolescent populations at high risk of HIV infection.

2 Training adolescents to prevent infection

Adolescents must be trained so they can participate in helping to end AIDS in their age group. UNICEF works with partners to:

- Increase awareness among adolescents of the importance of prevention strategies
- Educate young people about the risks
- Give adolescents access to HIV information, education and peer support

UNICEF and its partners strive to engage young people in designing and planning community programmes and technology-based innovations to provide safe spaces for adolescents – especially those in groups at higher risk of infection – to voice and share their concerns.

For adolescents living with HIV or at risk of infection, UNICEF aims to expand HIV prevention models with increased use of pre-exposure prophylaxis – the use of HIV drugs given to people without HIV to significantly reduce the risk of contracting the virus.

3 Testing adolescents

For adolescents to be aware of the risks, they must have easy ways to check their status. UNICEF works with partners to increase demand for, and access to, HIV testing – including self-testing for adolescents – in existing points of contact, such as family planning centres and community youth groups. Innovative self-testing kits that give instant results in a confidential manner are ideal for adolescents who fear the stigma attached to testing, or who are uncomfortable going to health clinics. This kind of innovation helps to reach adolescents who otherwise might be missed.

4 Empowering adolescent girls and young mothers

UNICEF is seeking to expand HIV prevention models for at-risk adolescent girls and young mothers through social, behaviour and biomedical approaches. The approaches include education on prevention and increased access to self-testing and pre-exposure prophylaxis in areas with high prevalence of HIV among children. Young women need support to protect themselves from contracting the virus from partners. They should be tested regularly if they are at risk or when they become pregnant, and they should be given access to antiretroviral therapy when needed.



CASE STUDY: Increasing HIV testing among adolescents and youth in key populations in Brazil

Young people are bearing the brunt of the HIV epidemic in Brazil. Over the past decade, the rate of new HIV infections among 15- to 24-year-olds has significantly increased. Although the AIDS-related mortality rate decreased by 5 per cent in the general population between 2004 and 2015, it increased during the same period by 53 per cent among adolescents aged 15–19 years.

UNICEF has supported the Viva Melhor Sabendo Jovem (Youth Aware) project in collaboration with the MAC AIDS Fund and in partnership with local, state and national public institutions, NGOs and community networks. This prevention and awareness-oriented project uses mobile health units to bring essential services – including HIV testing and counselling and testing for syphilis and hepatitis B and C – to adolescents and young people, especially those in populations most vulnerable to HIV infection, such as men who have sex with men, sexually exploited adolescents, and adolescents in conflict with the law. For young people living with HIV, the mobile units promote engagement with the health service and retention in care.

The project uses a range of tools to attract attention among target populations, including a public awareness campaign involving bloggers, rappers and hip-hop musicians. This was particularly effective in reaching young males, who made up 60 per cent of those reached in the project's first three years. Behaviour change communication strategies included peer mobilization and direct dialogue among peers that helped raise awareness of how HIV is prevented and the importance of testing for HIV and sexually transmitted infections.

The project began in 2013 in the cities of Belém, Fortaleza, Manaus, Porto Alegre, Recife and São Paulo. Overall, the project has increased HIV testing and antiretroviral therapy initiation rates among adolescents, and it has increased the number of adolescents living with HIV who have reached and sustained undetectable viral loads. In São Paulo, for example, the number of tests increased by 47 per cent between 2013 and 2016.

www.unicef.org/brazil/hiv-aids-e-sifilis



How the private sector can invest

UNICEF believes that the private sector isn't a postscript; it must be a part of solutions to the world's gravest global challenges. A broad range of partners – philanthropists, foundations, businesses and individuals – can help create change at the global, regional and country level, and speed up the rate of finding solutions to make a world where all have equal opportunities to survive and thrive.

The private sector has a critical role in helping to improve the lives of children around the world, leveraging its expertise and assets to better serve the needs of hard-to-reach children and adolescents. It brings innovation, efficiency and know-how. UNICEF and partners will not end the AIDS epidemic in adolescents without including the private sector in the response.

The private sector can be the catalyst to help reverse the trend of HIV infections among adolescents. By contributing to UNICEF's holistic approach, partners can support a spectrum of interventions, from influencing government policies and programmes to promoting empowerment and education activities. The private sector partners can work with UNICEF in the following areas.

Financing

The progress the global community has made is under threat as investments in HIV have declined. UNICEF therefore urgently needs financial contributions from the private sector to implement its programmes. Flexible funding is critical, as it allows UNICEF to target communities with the appropriate interventions and make a difference where it is needed most.

Innovation and technology

UNICEF has a strong track record of investing in innovation and technology that can speed up results. UNICEF is continually looking at new solutions and ways of working and sharing knowledge to achieve even more for children, using the power of evidence

to effect change. Together with private sector partners, UNICEF can:

- Increase efforts for rapid testing for HIV without the need for complex laboratory tests. This helps to reveal HIV cases among adolescents, start them on treatment immediately if necessary and link them to ongoing health care.
- Increase access to self-testing for adolescents in existing points of contact, including family planning centres and community youth groups, and ensure young people have access to life-saving HIV knowledge, skills and prevention services.
- Expand HIV prevention models for at-risk HIV-negative adolescents with increased use of pre-exposure prophylaxis.
- Engage young people in designing and planning community programmes and technology-based innovations to provide safe spaces for youth to voice and share their concerns.
- Use innovative digital technologies to transform how to reach, inform and treat adolescents at risk of HIV, and continue enhancing digital technologies and e-learning platforms to share knowledge on caring for adolescents with HIV. This includes, for example, using digital platforms such as U-Report and RapidPro to track interventions and promote adolescents' participation to improve services.
- Develop and roll out tools to address barriers to ending AIDS, including creating new ways to improve access to, and ease of, testing and treating adolescents.

Expertise

Partners from a range of fields, sectors and industries are needed to contribute new approaches and fresh perspectives, fill knowledge gaps and mobilize stakeholders and influencers to deliver solutions to reduce new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths.



Data and evidence generation

Data collection, evidence generation and learning are central to programmatic success and help UNICEF determine where to target its work. UNICEF looks to partners for support in building effective ways to collect, store and analyse data to find the hardest to reach and better target efforts to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV. Together, UNICEF and partners can:

- Understand where the ‘missed’, unidentified adolescents are, especially those whose parents and family members are known to be living with HIV, so they can be tested, treated if necessary and kept on their treatment programmes.
- Improve the ability of prevention programmes to target and identify hidden, invisible and hard-to-reach populations such as by mapping personal networks and through champions in groups at high risk of infection.

Advocacy, communication and influence

UNICEF looks at the reach of partners – whether through their products and services or their communication and advocacy platforms – to influence, reinforce and advance key messages and priorities with a joint voice. They help UNICEF speak to children, adolescents and mothers to raise awareness of how to prevent HIV infection. The private sector can help UNICEF to:

- Continue working with a wide range of partners – people living with HIV, local non-governmental organizations, donors and governments at all levels, civil society, the private sector and academia – to advocate for increased investment in developing community interventions. UNICEF works to convince governments to include funding for HIV and AIDS strategies in national budgets, and collaborates with donors such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the United States’ President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief to secure flexible funding for programmes to end AIDS.
- Maintain its role as a leader in learning, data sharing and programming to guide global conversations on HIV prevention, treatment, care and support for adolescents living with HIV.
- Continue supporting advocacy for more comprehensive data to help governments identify groups most at risk and strengthen national, regional and local data systems to zero in on gaps in responses.

Why partner with UNICEF?

Global impact

When supporting UNICEF, partners are empowering millions of vulnerable children and adolescents. UNICEF’s global reach and close collaboration with governments, civil society, adolescents and the private sector means its impact has a multiplier effect, allow the organization to leverage investments for solutions at scale.

Influence

UNICEF engages with and convenes government and other partners on initiatives for education, protection, health, nutrition and civic engagement. UNICEF works as a team with partners from a range of backgrounds, bringing expertise to the table and giving partners a voice in providing input to solutions..

Visibility

Recognition opportunities – including on social media – allow supporters to publicize their partnership with UNICEF and showcase their commitment to children and adolescents.

Opportunities for co-creation

UNICEF is seeking global strategic partners to achieve impact at scale. By leveraging the power of the private sector’s innovation and financial resources, UNICEF can respond to the immense challenges to economic mobility and equitable opportunity that children and adolescents face in developing countries.



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