

THE GLOBAL CAMPAIGN ON CHILDREN AND AIDS

Q. Why do we need an AIDS campaign that focuses specifically on children?

- A. Children are the missing face of AIDS. Despite the fact 1,400 children under 15 die of AIDS-related illnesses every day, more than 6,000 young people aged 15 to 24 are newly infected with HIV every day, and 15 million children have been orphaned by AIDS, the world still thinks of HIV and AIDS as something affecting primarily adults.

The HIV and AIDS epidemic has been a focus of international concern for more than two decades, yet the overwhelming majority of young people do not know how to avoid HIV and do not have access to the information, skills and services needed to protect themselves. Less than 10 percent of pregnant women receive services to prevent transmission of HIV to their infants. And less than 10 percent of children orphaned or made vulnerable by AIDS receive public support or services.

Children are missing from the minds of global policymakers, national governments, pharmaceutical companies, academic institutions and public groups responding to the AIDS pandemic.

The world must be alerted to the reality that HIV and AIDS is robbing tens of millions of children of childhood itself. Children must have the prominent place on the global AIDS agenda that they deserve.

Q. How are children and young people affected by HIV and AIDS?

- A. Children are directly impacted in several ways:
- Although the majority of people living with HIV are still adults, children under 15 account for one in six AIDS-related deaths, and one in seven new infections. As we enter the third decade of the epidemic, a child under 15 dies of an AIDS-related illness every minute of every day, and a young person aged 15-24 contracts HIV every 15 seconds.
 - Every day, over 6,000 young people aged 15-24 are newly infected with HIV, there are almost 1,800 new paediatric infections, and 1,400 children under 15 die of AIDS-related illness.
 - Globally, 15 million children have lost at least one parent to AIDS. By 2010, approximately 18 million children in sub-Saharan Africa alone will have lost at least one parent to AIDS.
 - Currently, fewer than 10 percent of orphans and vulnerable children are receiving public support, fewer than 5 percent of HIV-positive children are receiving treatment, and under 10 percent of pregnant women have access to services to prevent HIV transmission to their babies.

Q. What is *Unite for Children, Unite against AIDS*?

- A. *Unite for Children, Unite against AIDS* is a global campaign to alert the world to the fact that children are missing from the global AIDS agenda.

It provides a platform for urgent and sustained programs, advocacy and fundraising to limit the impact of HIV and AIDS on children and help halt the spread of the disease. Policymakers and the global public must become aware that AIDS not only affect adults, but is having a devastating affect on children throughout the world. Convened by UNICEF and involving partners from every sector of the global community, the campaign outlines a child-based approach to holding the world to its promises to reverse the spread of HIV.

It offers mechanisms for a faster and stronger response by all those who can make a difference from the community level up.

Q. What are the primary goals of the campaign?

A. The campaign will provide a child-focused framework for country-level programs around four urgent imperatives that can make a real difference in the lives and life chances of children affected by HIV and AIDS. The “Four Ps” are:

- Prevention of primary infections (prevent infection among adolescents, young people and women)
- Prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission
- Paediatric treatment
- Protect and support children infected and affected by HIV and AIDS

The campaign aims to scale up efforts in all of these areas, which are in line with the Millennium Development Goals and recent commitments on AIDS.

Q. Why do we need this campaign now?

A. Because tens of millions of children are missing childhood because of AIDS. They are missing mothers, fathers, teachers, doctors and community leaders. They are deprived of education, healthcare and the chance to have a healthy future. They are left unprotected from abuse, exploitation and illness. Children are suffering not only because of AIDS itself, but because the world has not recognised that AIDS is wreaking havoc on childhood.

The AIDS pandemic is unravelling decades of progress for children and undermining progress toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals, not only across wide swaths of Africa, but increasingly in South Asia and Southeast Asia.

Governments have committed themselves to addressing the impact of AIDS on children, but have made little progress in supporting and protecting children made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS. Millions of children, adolescents and young people are at risk and need protection. The world must act now, urgently and decisively, to put children at the centre of the AIDS agenda and ensure an AIDS-free generation.

Q. Does the campaign include a call to action?

A. Yes. The campaign calls upon every part of global society to join together to put the care and protection of children, adolescents and young people at the center of the HIV/AIDS agenda. Specifically, the campaign will work to:

- **Mobilise resources.** The campaign will press for increased global funding for AIDS, with part of this specifically earmarked for children affected by the disease.
- **Foster corporate social responsibility.** The campaign will lobby for all corporations operating in high-prevalence countries to develop socially responsible policies for workers, their families and the communities in which they are based, since these ultimately also protect children.
- **Move toward universal access to antiretroviral treatment.** The campaign will provide a platform for continued and intensified advocacy for increased pharmaceutical research and development of paediatric formulations by governments, academic institutions and pharmaceutical companies from both rich and poor countries.
- **Reduce the price of existing treatment and testing for children.**
- **Work toward ending school user fees.** The campaign will provide a platform for continued advocacy for international financial institutions to give all possible support to measures to abolish these user fees and ensure all children have the opportunity to attend school.

Q. What is unique about this campaign?

- A.** This is the largest campaign ever mounted to bring the world's attention to the global impact of HIV and AIDS on children and young people.
- The campaign recognises and addresses the special needs of children and young people affected by HIV and AIDS.
 - It recognises and addresses the needs of their caregivers.
 - It offers urgent and specific interventions and calls to action.
 - It maps out a response to the impact of AIDS on children with a scale that far exceeds anything to date.
 - It addresses the impact of AIDS on children not only in hardest-hit sub-Saharan Africa, but also in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, Asia and the Americas.

Q. Who are the partners involved in the campaign?

- A.** UNICEF and UNAIDS are leading the initiative along with partners from all sectors of society, including governments, NGOs, academic institutions, faith-based groups, community groups and youth and sporting organisations.

Meeting the challenge will require collaboration and co-operation between people working on all aspects of the epidemic. Efforts to keep children in school by ministries of education will often depend on efforts by ministries of health to prevent childhood illnesses and malnutrition, by ministries of finance and agriculture to prevent hunger.

Managers of the health sector will have to link voluntary counselling and testing with prevention programs, antiretroviral therapy, family planning services, nutrition support, and interventions to prevent or treat sexually transmitted infections.

The campaign will be positioned within existing initiatives such as the 'Three Ones' (UNAIDS), the Three by Five Initiative (WHO), National Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSPS), National Plans and other partnership strategies.

For more information: www.uniteforchildren.org