

Do you know your rights



Voices of Youth

www.unicef.org/voy/

What young people are saying... “Access for all”

Key messages from young people for the AIDS Conference:

What can young people do?

- > Participate actively to raise awareness
- > Protect themselves against the virus
- > Find out where, and get tested and counselled
- > Care for those living with HIV and AIDS – young people, children and adults
- > Believe in themselves and their future

What can leaders/parents/guardians do?

- > Break the silence around sex, HIV and AIDS
- > Provide resources and support for awareness and skills
- > Support and implement youth-friendly health services

Young people participating in *Voices of Youth's* International AIDS Conference discussion forums raised the following issues as crucial for consideration and action at Bangkok.

Information & knowledge

The silence and taboo surrounding sex, HIV and AIDS must be broken. Raising awareness should begin early in a child's life, both at home and at school, and the information should dispel young people's misconceptions about HIV and AIDS. Adults and leaders must provide the necessary financial, human, and social resources to disseminate information through diverse means, including through schools, media, theatre and more.

“HIV/AIDS have come a long way and it is time for everybody, especially the young people to take a stand... KNOWLEDGE IS POWER ...Young people deserve the right to be told all the facts about HIV/AIDS.”
girl, >21, Botswana

“There is no ‘one’ skill that can spare one from AIDS. But through education one can be equipped with the necessary knowledge to be responsible and self-contained as to stay away from acts leading to HIV/AIDS.”
boy, 17, Philippines

Skills

Life skills education that includes decision-making, critical thinking, and negotiation will enable young people to make informed choices and decisions that will keep them safe from HIV and AIDS. Young people need to be empowered with self confidence and a sense of control over their lives. Gender awareness and sensitivity are also critical for both boys and girls to protect themselves from exploitation and relate to each other respectfully.

“Confidentiality is one of the biggest things a young person looks for in an organization to get tested. Just showing that they have enough respect for a person that they won't run off and tell their parents shows that they'll have enough respect ...”
boy, 15, USA

Services

Young people need to know where to find testing and counselling services. The services must be youth-friendly, appeal to young people, and keep records and results confidential. Young people should be proactive as peer educators and engage in caring for people living with HIV and AIDS.

Since 1995, UNICEF's interactive website, *Voices of Youth* (www.unicef.org/voy/), has focused on exploring the educational and community building potential of the Internet, and facilitating the active and substantive participation of young people on child rights and development related issues. *Voices of Youth* hosted e-discussions for young people globally in preparation for the XV International AIDS Conference, and will continue to host these discussions as follow-up to the Conference. This is a summary of what was discussed.