UNAIDS Report Highlights Successful Community-Based HIV Groups [VIDEO]

"Let communities lead" in the fight against HIV, urges UNAIDS on the eve of World AIDS Day, noting that many groups lack critical funding.

November 30, 2023 By Laura Schmidt

In advance of World AIDS Day 2023, observed December 1, UNAIDS (the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS) has launched a report titled Let Communities Lead that stresses that community-based HIV organizations must be able to count on the financial support of governments and donors to continue their fight to end AIDS by 2030, according to a UNAIDS news release.

Let Communities Lead acknowledges the importance of investing in community-led advocacy programs to prevent and treat HIV. The report is both "a celebration of the critical role of communities" and "a call to action to decision-makers to fully support the lifesaving work of communities and to clear away the barriers that stand in their way."

Ahead of #WorldAIDSDay UNAIDS is calling for urgent support to Let Communities Lead in the fight to end AIDS.

Read press release - https://t.co/MuYesCBeTR

pic.twitter.com/fjHRUlhItW

— UNAIDS (@UNAIDS) November 28, 2023

The report highlights the great strides communities have made in eliminating AIDS. For example, in Nigeria, community-based organizations (CBOs) were associated with a 64% increase in access

to HIV treatment. What's more, Nigeria saw a fourfold increase in condom use among people at risk for HIV and a doubling of the likelihood that individuals would use HIV prevention services.

You can download the report here and an executive summary here. UNAIDS also launched the interactive website LetCommunitiesLead.UNAIDS.org to highlight the work of CBOs, including those serving LGBTQ people, women and faith communities as well as those working to combat HIV-related stigma. UNAIDS leaders launched the report with a discussion you can watch on YouTube and below:

"Communities across the world have shown that they are ready, willing and able to lead the way. But they need the barriers obstructing their work to be pulled down, and they need to be properly resourced," said UNAIDS executive director Winnie Byanyima in the news release. "Too often, communities are treated by decision-makers as problems to be managed, instead of being recognized and supported as leaders. Communities are not in the way—they light the way to the end of AIDS."

"Communities have transformed public health with community-led service delivery. All the work they do is saving lives. So today, we call for community work to be funded. We are all affected when they are not resourced," @Winnie_Byanyima pic.twitter.com/z5Xj8fNkEX

— UNAIDS (@UNAIDS) November 28, 2023

While evidence shows that community-led organizations are effective in preventing and treating HIV, many organizations still lack funding and resources to drive service uptake and improve outcomes.

As a young advocate living with HIV, @mercyshibemba credits communities for giving her the strength to stand

up against the challenges that she & others face. This message is echoed in UNAIDS' #WorldAIDSDay report Let Communities Lead ????????https://t.co/MuYesCBMJp pic.twitter.com/sOevsPlL0j

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Authors of the report detail why and how we must:

- Make communities' leadership roles central to the formulation, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all plans, policies and programs that will affect communities and that impact the HIV response—"nothing about us without us."
- Fully and sustainably fund communities' leadership roles so that programs can be scaled up and the people implementing them can be properly supported and remunerated.
- Remove barriers to communities' leadership roles by ensuring civil society space and protecting the human rights of all people, including people from marginalized and criminalized communities.

"We have seen groundbreaking developments with U=U [U=U, or Undetectable Equals Untransmittable, refers to the fact that people living with HIV who maintain an undetectable viral load cannot sexually transmit the virus], improved access to medicines and have made great strides in decriminalization," said Robbie Lawlor, cofounder of Access to Medicines Ireland, in the news release. "Yet we are expected to move mountains without being financially supported. We are supposed to fight for a more equitable world and are tasked with dismantling stigma yet are sidelined in crucial discussions. We are at a tipping point. Communities can no longer be relegated to the periphery. The time for leadership is now."

The report also underscores the importance of having people living with HIV, women and currently or formerly incarcerated individuals help identify strategies to best reach and serve the individuals most in need of outreach and services.

For the full 2023 UNAIDS report, click here.

To read more, click #World AIDS Day or #UNAIDS. There, you'll find headlines such as "Yes, We Can End AIDS by 2030. A New UNAIDS Report Shows How," "The Path that Ends AIDS Will Boost Progress Towards Sustainable Development Goals" and "Two More U.S. Cities Join Global Fast-Track Initiative to End HIV."

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