



Press Release

World AIDS DAY 2019

Ending AIDS: Empowering young people to make the difference

Adolescents and young people constitute a growing share of people living with HIV worldwide and therefore need to be empowered to take part in the HIV response. Globally, the UNAIDS estimates that in 2018 alone, 510,000 young people between the ages of 10 to 24 were newly infected with HIV, of whom 190,000 were adolescents between the ages of 10 and 19.

Ghana has made progress in its HIV and AIDS response however, the recent slight surge in the disease among young people is a cause of worry. With a national HIV prevalence of 1.69%, and an HIV population of 334,713 in 2018, data from the National AIDS Control Programme (NACP) estimates that the adolescent HIV population (between 10-19 years) stood at 21,111, with an estimated 2,062 new HIV infections also recorded in 2018.

Lack of treatment literacy and dedicated adolescent friendly services for those living with HIV is a great worry for most of these Adolescents Living with HIV in Ghana. Again, despite intensive education and laudable zero-stigma initiatives in Ghana over the years, most of them continue to face gross discernment from a section of the population.

On December 1, 2019, Ghana joins the rest of the world to mark World AIDS Worlds 2019 with the focus on the invaluable contribution of Communities to the AIDS response. Communities in this context refers to people living with HIV and all key populations affected by the HIV epidemic, including young people. As a Ghanaian not-for-profit non-governmental organization focused on empowering women, children and the youth, Hope for Future Generations (HFFG), shares in the theme of this year's World AIDS Day commemoration that communities are the lifeblood of an effective AIDS response and as such must be empowered to come out and to own the HIV response in Ghana.

We cannot as a country say we are achieving the 90-90-90 targets and ending AIDS by 2030 if Adolescents Living with HIV in Ghana are left out from critical decision-making processes concerning their health due to stigma. Young people need to be part of the design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of HIV services and activities related to prevention, treatment, care and support of people affected by HIV.

They need HIV services that are accessible, available, and meet quality standards



across the HIV care cascade. Those living with HIV when given the needed care, as well as legal and political support will have the power and capacity to lead the response in their own way.

As witnessed under the Community Systems Strengthening (CSS) component of the WAPCAS/ Global Fund NFM II Project which is empowering HIV, tuberculosis and malaria communities young people have been specifically empowered to adhere to strict drug schedules, intensify psychosocial counselling and support for young people, remove barriers and misconceptions about HIV that impact on the physical and mental wellbeing of adolescents. These young people have had to devise different strategies and deserve the support to deliver towards the achievement of the HIV response. We therefore use today to remind stakeholders in the HIV response that the time has come for young people to be actively involved in the planning, development and implementation of HIV interventions in Ghana

HFFG and the hundreds of young people living with HIV in Ghana also use this occasion to call on the Government of Ghana to prioritize and increase domestic resources for health, investment in the general health of young people, especially in the face of continuous dwindling donor funding. We should equally help in meeting our co-financing obligations and make adequate use of donor funds allotted to Ghana.

Let us End AIDS by empowering young people to make the difference. HIV intervention for young people but without them is just a mirage.

END

Editor's Note

Hope for Future Generations (HFFG) is a national , community non-governmental, not-for-profit organization that seeks to improve the health and socio-economic status of women, children and young people through innovative and acceptable participatory strategies. HFFG has over the last 17 years been at the forefront of various community interventions in Ghana and has over the years gathered enormous expertise in establishing and strengthening community systems and structures. The organization seeks to provide equal opportunities in all our interventions for these target groups.