



The 2021 High Level Meeting on HIV and AIDS: Advocacy Toolkit for Young People

1. Purpose of this guide
2. Young people and HIV: the importance of the youth movement in the global HIV response
 - 2.1 Overview of the HIV epidemic and young people
 - 2.2 SDGs and HIV
 - 2.3 The importance of meaningful youth engagement in the HIV response
3. Background about the High-Level Meetings
 - 3.1 Why are High-Level Meetings important?
 - 3.2 The 2016 High-Level Meeting on Ending AIDS
4. The 2021 High Level Meeting on HIV and AIDS
 - 4.1 What is expected to happen at the HLM?
 - 4.2 What are the key dates/events?
5. How can you engage with the 2021 HLM on HIV and AIDS?
 - 5.1 National-level advocacy
 - 5.2 Join collective global youth action!
6. After the HLM



1. Purpose of this guide

The HLM Youth Guide has been developed by The PACT and UNAIDS to provide young people with information and guidance on what is and how to engage in the High-Level Meeting on HIV & AIDS that will take place from 8-10 June at the United Nations General Assembly. The intended audience of this Guide are young activists and youth-led organizations working on HIV and SRHR at all levels of the response, especially those key populations most affected by HIV.

The information on how to engage in the 2021 HLM is on page 12.

2. Young people and HIV: the importance of the youth movement in the global HIV response

2.1 *Overview of the HIV Epidemic and Young People*

Despite progress made on the HIV epidemic, the 2020 targets for new HIV transmissions were missed, and young people, especially adolescent girls and young women and young key populations (gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men, transgender people, people who use drugs, sex workers, people who are current or former prisoners), remain disproportionately impacted by HIV. While existing policies such as parental consent for HIV testing is seen to have continually negatively impacting HIV service for adolescents, many young people living with HIV also have inadequate access to healthcare services as well as the wider psychosocial services required for young people living with HIV to be able to thrive. Young people, and in particular young key populations living with and affected by HIV, still face stigma and discrimination that must be eliminated if we are to reach the goal of ending AIDS by 2030.

Young people made up 23.7% of the world's population in 2020¹. It is clear that youth-led interventions are needed to get the global HIV response back on track. Despite this, many young people still report inadequate knowledge of HIV prevention, as well as poor access to comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), and sexual and reproductive health services. One barrier to accessing such services is parental consent to HIV testing and treatment laws, violating the privacy of young people and further adding obstacles to accessing HIV testing.

It is also important to note that young people are a diverse group, and not a homogenous people with the same needs. The needs of adolescent girls and young women may differ from young transgender people, which also would differ from the needs of young people who inject drugs. The intersections of identity and discrimination must also be examined and tackled; for example, a young transgender person who uses drugs will need to be able to access a number of different services that address the intersection of transgender and substance use health services that are free from stigma and discrimination.

Based on the shared experiences of young advocates and leaders, the needs of young people in all their diversity are currently not being fulfilled. This not only requires governments and health services to provide the required services and tackle stigma and discrimination, but it also requires that young people be recognised as experts and leaders and be given the opportunity for peer-led HIV responses.

2.2 The SDGs, HIV, and Young People

During the 70th session of the UN General Assembly, UN member states reached consensus on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was a set of 17 goals that balance the economic, environmental, and social dimensions of sustainable development.

HIV is specifically targeted within the SDG framework, with SDG 3.3 specifically mentioning ending AIDS as a public health threat. While not specifically mentioning HIV, other SDGs are also critical to the realisation of the ending of the AIDS epidemic and ensuring that people living with and affected by HIV.

Target 3.3: By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases



Goals on education (4), poverty reduction (1), and gender equality (5) will all be key to ending the AIDS epidemic.

Social inequalities and stigma drive the epidemic and its impact on young people; realisation of wider goals tackling these issues will be needed to get the AIDS response back on track.

2.3 The importance of meaningful youth engagement in the HIV response.

Since the beginning of the epidemic, community-led responses have been key to tackling not just HIV, but the myriad social issues and factors that come with it. Despite the key role that communities play in the response, young people are still often marginalised and seen as “beneficiaries” of programmes, rather than as leaders and implementers in their own right. The leadership of young people in their own communities

is key if we are ever to reach goals set under the Agenda for Sustainable Development. Within youth leadership and youth engagement diversity of experience must also be ensured; young key populations such as gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men, young sex workers (18+), young transgender people, and young people who use drugs must all be engaged to speak on their own unique experience and hold governments accountable for their commitments.

The 2021 HLM is an important opportunity for young people to actively engage and influence this global decision-making process to ensure that their needs and priorities are considered in the future of the HIV response.

3. Background to the High-Level Meetings

3.1 What are the High-Level Meetings and why are they important for the HIV response?

UN High Level Meetings are an opportunity for member states to review their progress on matters that are of global importance and reaffirm commitments to tackling these issues. In the context of the AIDS epidemic, the first High Level Meeting (then called a UN General Assembly Special Session) was in 2001 and since then a meeting has been held every 5 years to revisit global progress on HIV and AIDS.

The normal outcome from a high-level meeting is a political declaration, a document that through negotiations is agreed upon by member states that reaffirms national commitments to tackling the epidemic.

Civil society, and in particular youth civil society, will have a key role in pushing for progressive language in the political declaration, and ensuring that community needs, and community-led responses are recognised by member states.

3.2 The 2016 High Level Meeting on Ending AIDS

The last High-Level Meeting on HIV was in 2016 and the outcome was the 2016 Political Declaration: [“Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast Track to Accelerating the Fight against HIV and to Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030”](#).

The 2016 Political Declaration was significant as it was the first political declaration that mentioned and acknowledged the needs of key populations, demonstrating the critical role civil society plays in pushing for progressive language and targets, as well as acknowledging the leadership of young people in the AIDS response

Despite this, during the negotiations for the 2021 HLM, there was resistance from member states on allowing civil society engagement. This resistance, as well as well-known member states’ resistance to the acknowledgement of the needs of key populations, demonstrates the need for coordinated civil society engagement in the HLM. In particular, young people will be key to pushing a progressive agenda that will create a political environment that will allow the effective fight against AIDS. .

Despite ambitious targets set in the 2016 Political Declaration, these were missed globally and now new, more ambitious and progressive targets will need to be set if goals set under the Agenda for Sustainable Development are ever to be reached.

4. The 2021 High-Level Meeting on HIV and AIDS

On 23 February, the General Assembly adopted resolution [75/260](#) on the organization of the 2021 High-Level Meeting on HIV and AIDS (HLM). The resolution calls for the HLM to be held on 8-10 June 2021 and invites Member States to participate at the HLM.

4.1 What is expected to happen at the HLM?

The 2021 HLM will be unlike any other HLM on HIV and AIDS due to the restrictions caused by COVID-19. It is anticipated that the 2021 HLM will be a hybrid virtual/in-person event, with member states' missions in New York participating in-person and other members of delegations, including civil society, participating virtually.

It is also expected that there will be official "side events" that happen at the same time as the main plenary speeches. These will often be on specific topics important to HIV and AIDS and delivered by civil society organisations, NGOs, and governments. Side events normally have to be sponsored by a government and for CSOs to engage they usually have to be in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (referred to as having ECOSOC status). Know more about how to apply for consultative status with ECOSOC [here](#).

The main expected outcome of the HLM is a new Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS. This will be a document where member states reaffirm their commitment to tackling the AIDS epidemic. The "zero draft" of the Political Declaration will be written and released by the co-chairs of the HLM, Australia and Namibia at the end of April. The contents of the Political Declaration will then be negotiated by all 193 UN member states to arrive at consensus on the contents.

This does not happen in only the 3 days of the High-Level Meeting but begins weeks in advance. The 2021 HLM's schedule will be much tighter than previous years. The modalities resolution was only released on 23rd February, giving around 3 months for preparation for the HLM, much less time than in previous years. It is important that as young people we get involved as quickly as possible in all aspects of the HLM to ensure relevant and acceptable language and commitments around our needs in the context of ending the AIDS epidemic. The Multi-Stakeholder Task Force (MSTF) begins working on the 22.3.21.

4.2 What are the key dates & events?



4.3 How was the Multistakeholder Task Force convened and who is represented?

To facilitate civil society involvement and ensure an open, transparent and participatory process, UNAIDS opened a call for applications to select the members of the Multistakeholder Task Force (MSTF) comprised of representatives from civil society and the private sector by end of March. The members of the MSTF were selected by UNAIDS and the PCB NGO Delegation using the overall criteria set out in the [call for nominations](#) to select 16 individuals for each of the categories of members.

The Task Force will advise UNAIDS, as the lead substantive UN entity, and through it, the Office of the President of the General Assembly, regarding the format, theme and programme of the multi-stakeholder hearing (MSH), as well as help identify speakers for the MSH and HLM plenary and panel discussions.

The MSTF is made up of 16 civil society representatives:

Representing	Name	Organisation	Country
One representative openly living with HIV from networks of people living with HIV.	Andrew Spieldenner	US PLHIV Caucus and MPact Global Action	USA
One representative openly living with HIV from networks of women living with HIV.	Souhaila Bensaid	MENA-ROSA	Tunisia
One representative openly living with HIV from networks of young people living with HIV.	Aaron Sunday	African Network of Adolescents and Young Persons Development (ANAYD) and Association of Positive Youth Living with HIV in Nigeria (APYIN)	Nigeria
One representative from each of the key populations (people who use drugs, sex workers, transgender people, gay bisexual, and other men who have sex with men, people in prison settings).	Jacqueline Rocha Cortes	MNCP National Movement of WLWA	Brazil
	Phelister Abdalla,	Key Affected Populations Health and Legal Rights Alliance (KESWA),	Kenya
	Aleksey Lakhov	Saint Petersburg Charitable Fund "Humanitarian Action" and Harm Reduction NGOs Coalition "Outreach"	Russia
	Judy Chang	International Network of People who Use Drugs (INPUD)	Italy

Representing	Name	Organisation	Country
One member of the UNAIDS PCB NGO delegation	Jules Kim	UNAIDS PCB NGO Delegation and Scarlet Alliance	Australia
A representative from a women's organization, particularly working on sexual and reproductive health and rights.	Sonal Mehta	International Planned Parenthood Federation	India
A representative from a young's people's organization, particularly working on sexual and reproductive health and rights.	Yasmina (Molly) Chan Lopez	Red Juvenil de AMUGEN (REDJUAMU GEN)	Guatemala
A representative from the private sector.	Angela Lee Loy	Aegis Business Solutions	Trinidad and Tobago
A representative from a faith-based organization.	Rev Canon Prof Gideon B Byamugisha	International Network of Religious Lead ers Living with and/or Personally Affected by HIV (INERELA+)	Uganda
A representative from networks or organizations of indigenous peoples.	Severin Sindizera,	Indigenous Peoples Global Forum for Sustainable Development (IPGFForSD)	Burundi
A representative from networks or organizations of persons with disabilities.	Jacques Lloyd	Afrique Rehabilitation and Research Consultants NPC	South Africa

Representing	Name	Organisation	Country
A representative from an organization working with Tuberculosis and HIV.	Alia Amimi	International Treatment Preparedness Coalition (ITPC)-MENA, Morocco	Morocco
A representative from gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men	Adilet Alimkulov	Kyrgyz Indigo	Kyrgyzstan

You can contact Aaron Sunday(harunaaaronsunday@gmail.com) & Molly Chan (molly.yas@gmail.com) for more details

4.4 The Multistakeholder Hearing

The Modalities Resolution requests the President of the General Assembly (PGA) to organize and preside over an interactive multistakeholder hearing (MSH) with the participation of communities and other stakeholders to be held 23rd April 2021.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the MSH will be held virtually.

4.5 Regional and country consultations

The HLM Modalities Resolution also requests the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) to continue to facilitate, to the extent possible, inclusive consultations at the country and regional levels, with the participation of relevant stakeholders, such as Governments, civil society, including non- governmental organizations and the private sector.

The objectives of these consultations are:

- To brief leaders in the lead up to the HLM on the objectives and importance of the HLM and the Political Declaration and to highlight the leadership role that they can play in shaping the future of the AIDS response globally.

- To familiarise country leadership with the new Global AIDS Strategy and the new proposed 2025 targets, and when available, the recommendations of the 2021 Secretary General's report to the General Assembly. These will form the basis for negotiating the 2021 Political Declaration.
- To advocate for participation at the HLM at the highest level
- To advocate for and ensure participation of civil society as part of the national delegations to the HLM as well as regional and country consultations.
- To gather intelligence to input into a regional political mapping of champions, influencers and possible dissenters on key issues.

The participation of youth representatives in these consultations is critical to ensure the opportunity for direct advocacy with government officials for the adoption of a progressive political declaration and for the inclusion of civil society representatives, including young civil society representatives, in the national delegations.

5. How can you engage with the 2021 HLM on HIV and AIDS?

5.1 National Level Advocacy

In the 2021 HLM Modalities Resolution, member states are encouraged to include civil society representatives in their national delegations. As youth advocates, there are a few methods that you can use to get involved in the HLM:

- UNAIDS Country Offices, Regional Support Teams, and Youth Officers may be able to support you to get in touch with relevant national authorities and civil society representatives, including youth representatives, participating in the regional and country consultations for the HLM to get key advocacy messages across.
- National networks of people living with HIV and key populations that are not focussed on or specialising in youth may already be involved in national delegations or advocacy efforts. Reach out to these network(s) to explore partnering with them to ensure the needs of young people are included in their advocacy messages.

- Depending on your national context you may be able to reach out to local politicians to advocate for the inclusion of young people in national delegations to the HLM.
- Organise or participate in a letter-writing and other campaigns to your government to advocate for meaningful youth engagement in the HLM.

You can also use this as an opportunity to raise awareness of the AIDS epidemic and what will be needed to end it by 2030 in your local communities. The PACT, as a coalition, can support in linking you with other local and/or national organisations working on HIV.

5.2 Join collective youth action

Outside of national delegations, there are also opportunities to get involved at the global level.

- The Multistakeholder Taskforce, convened by UNAIDS, has two youth representatives as part of its 16-person membership. Engagement with the youth representatives will be key to ensuring youth messages are heard. There are also other constituents making up the task force from key populations that you may also be able to engage with to ensure that they are aware of the unique needs and requirements of young people within these key population groups.
- Some regions are organising youth-led groups for collective advocacy at the regional level. Reach out to national and regional organisations in your region to see how you can get involved.
- A coalition of youth-led organisations is working together to develop a global advocacy campaign to disseminate the key messages and statements on the priorities of young people for the HLM. Participating in surveys and discussions will be crucial to ensuring meaningful youth engagement with the coalition. You can email contactyouthpact@gmail.com for more information.

- Organisations with Special Consultative Status to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC status) are invited to participate in HLM processes. Reach out to national and regional networks who may have ECOSOC status (including those that are not just focusing on youth) and enquire about supporting their work. You can find the list of organisations with consultative ECOSOC Status [here](#).
- Share and amplify messages on social media and in your communities, particularly the joint messages on youth.

5.3 Join the High-Level Meeting virtually in June

Organisations and people can apply to be speakers at the High-Level Meeting in June. It is imperative that communities engage with this process to ensure a progressive and community-centred political declaration.

Organisations can apply for special accreditation to participate in the HLM [here](#):

Individuals can apply to be speakers at the High Level Meeting [here](#)

6. After the HLM

While the HLM will be an important time to ensure that the right commitments are made in tackling the AIDS epidemic for young people, it is only the beginning of work for the coming years.

The expected Political Declaration will prove a useful tool in holding governments and national HIV programmes accountable and can be used by youth-led organisations to target their advocacy. Reach out to national organisations working on HIV, government officials, health ministries, and UNAIDS country offices to request support in ensuring recommendations from the expected Political Declaration are implemented.

You can also use the expected Political Declaration in your advocacy on other global and national issues. If your country receives funding from The Global Fund, there may be opportunities for young people to participate in the country coordinating mechanism and you can ensure that Global Fund funded projects are in line with the expected Political Declaration.

The PACT has developed accountability tools such as the #UPROOT Youth-led Scorecards to measure the progress achieved by countries to end AIDS by 2030, and particularly on the issues that matter to and affect young people the most. The PACT and the youth-led organizations driving the youth-led scorecards are available and willing to support with the rollout of this accountability tool and creating and targeting national advocacy campaigns for our membership. If you want to know more visit [#UPROOT](#) section on The PACT website.



Created in partnership with:

The PACT

The Adolescent HIV Treatment Coalition

The Global Network of Young People Living with HIV (Y+ Global)

Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights

Youth Stop AIDS

Youth LEAD

Youth RISE

Youth Voices Count



ADOLESCENT
HIV TREATMENT
COALITION



working internationally for sexual
and reproductive rights



Youth LEAD

