

ICASA 2021 – Community Village

Title: **Young People and Faith Communities partnering to End AIDS**

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Background

Surveys in Low- & Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) show that only a third of young people aged 15-24 in sub-Saharan Africa had accurate knowledge about HIV transmission and prevention. Levels of knowledge are lower among adolescent girls and young women than in young men, and even lower among those in poverty, rural areas, and lower levels of education. To compound this, recent data indicate that only 25 per cent of adolescent girls and 17 per cent of adolescent boys aged 15-19 in Eastern and Southern Africa – the region most affected by HIV – have had access to HIV testing - in the past 12 months and received the result of the last test. The testing rates in West and Central Africa and South Asia are even lower.

Can faith and spiritual leaders, who have an influential role on behavior change and social norms in Africa, engage with young people to change the situation?

This workshop will engage faith leaders together with young people with the purpose of showcasing how *Dialogues* between these groups have the potential to increase individual and community knowledge, demand for and access to care and treatment services by young people as well as the potential of changing attitudes in faith communities enhancing mutual understanding and collaboration among these groups.

Key points

- Low HIV and sexual health knowledge is a key barrier to reducing HIV infections among young people
- A 'life-cycle' approach to HIV prevention can help respond to the changing challenges people face at different ages
- Faith and spiritual leaders have an important role to play in their communities, in particular, they have an influential role on behavior change and social norms.
- Dialogues between young people and faith leaders on HIV and AIDS are effective tools to enhance collaboration and mutual understanding among these groups

Objectives

- Lay the foundations for increased partnership/collaboration between faith leaders and young people to work together to increase HIV and sexual health knowledge starting from faith communities;
- Use existing tools such as the communication prototypes on HIV for faith communities developed by the Faith and Community Initiative to increase knowledge about HIV and demand creation of HIV services by young people:
<https://www.faithandcommunityinitiative.org> &
<https://www.faithandcommunityinitiative.org/hiv-podcasts>
- Discuss, develop and agree on joint strategic initiatives and activities

- Create ‘spaces of hospitality’ within the faith community designed to “welcome the strangers” and “the others in their otherness” based on respect for human rights and the inherent value of each human person
- Create places of worship that offer parents and guardians tools on sexuality and incorporate holistic sexuality education into their programmes, including those for youth
- Identify actions to reach marginalized populations, including advocating for legislative changes
- Foster a spirit of appreciation for youth from key populations and respectful engagement to advance policies and programmes designed to reduce stigma and discrimination

This interactive session will bring together young people, including young people living with HIV and from key population groups, faith leaders, lay providers, men, women, and organizations representing children and adolescents. It will use the [Framework for Dialogue methodology](#) to identify opportunities for joint action among the different groups and provide an opportunity for young people to share with faith leaders.

Format: Dialogue between a target group of African faith leaders with young people on how to *increase individual and community knowledge, demand for and access to care and treatment services by young people as well as change attitudes in faith communities enhancing mutual understanding and collaboration among these groups.*

Duration: 45m

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