



Faith communities taking action with children and youth living with HIV



World Council
of Churches

Too many children and adolescents living with HIV around the world lack access to HIV testing and treatment. We can do something about that! The World Council of Churches-Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (WCC-EAA) in collaboration with partners around the world, is embarking on an advocacy action with governments, pharmaceutical and diagnostic companies, and media to improve access to age-appropriate HIV information, testing and treatment for children and adolescents living with HIV. Children and young people are invited to take action with their school, faith community or family to help make this happen.

Key facts and challenges

- 2.1 million children are living with HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus)¹. Yet children remain largely forgotten in global and national efforts to address HIV and AIDS.
- While services and treatment exist to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV, many women in poor settings do not have access to care and treatment.
- In 2016, 400 children were newly infected with HIV each day. Most children living with HIV are infected through pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding. However, if the mother receives proper care and treatment the chance of passing on the virus can be reduced to 2 in 100.
- Women entering pregnancy who are already on ART have a decreased risk of transmission to the infant (less than 1 percent) compared to up to 25 percent during pregnancy with no treatment.
- Children under 15 years of age have inadequate access to HIV diagnosis and treatment.
- We are facing many difficulties in testing HIV in babies, children and adolescents, even though new diagnostic tools are available.
- Currently, only 43 percent of children in need of HIV treatment have access to it; and last year, only 43 per cent of HIV-exposed infants received an Early Infant Diagnosis (EID) test within the first two months of life.
- 6 per cent of people living with HIV are children, but children account for 12 per cent of AIDS-related deaths.
- Last year, 300 children died of AIDS-related causes daily. The situation is far worse in West and Central Africa, where less than a quarter of the children in need are accessing life-saving treatment.
- There is an urgent need for ARV medicines for babies and children that combine all the medication they need each day in one formulation. These are known as fixed-dose-combinations (FDCs).
- Not enough optimal formulations of ARVs exist nor are accessible to children, especially those under two years old. This is also because children living with HIV are a small drug-market. When FDCs exist, they can be bad tasting and difficult to swallow, challenging to store, and have complex dosing instructions. In addition, because of strict and complex regulatory rules, they are not available in all countries.

- Children living with HIV struggle to be identified and to get treatment, especially in countries where health systems have very little money or few staff trained in paediatric HIV.
- Stigma and discrimination are great barriers to testing and treatment both for children and adolescents. Age-appropriate HIV information could help break misconceptions and barriers and promote access to testing and treatment for all.
- AIDS-related illnesses are a leading cause of death among adolescents.
- In 2016, 610 000 young people between the ages of 15 and 24 years were newly infected with HIV; of those, 260 000 were adolescents between the ages of 15 and 19 years, with the majority being girls.
- In sub-Saharan Africa, girls account for three out of four new HIV infections among 15–19 year olds.
- Only 13 percent of adolescent girls and 9 percent of adolescent boys aged 15-19 in sub-Saharan Africa have been tested for HIV in the past 12 months and received the result of the last test. No test result means no access to treatment!

What you can do!

This action guide is for teachers and schools, parents and families, faith leaders and their communities, and all who play a vital role in making young people more aware of the world in which they live and empowering them to take action on behalf of, and in solidarity with, children and adolescents living with HIV.

Young people, especially those aged 11-24, are encouraged to write letters to government ministries, First Ladies, and to pharmaceutical and diagnostic companies asking them to improve access to age-appropriate HIV information, testing and treatment for children and adolescents. Ideas are also given for students and youth groups to raise awareness of these issues in local newspapers and other media.

Plans for three activities for youth groups, schools and families are included:

- learning about the situation faced by children and adolescents living with HIV
- writing letters to government health, education and finance ministries; to the First Ladies who are members of the Organization of African First Ladies against HIV and AIDS (OAFILA); to a target group of pharmaceutical and diagnostic companies;
- gaining media coverage about the letter writing activities and of the issues.

We are planning to display copies of the children and young people's letters at the Ecumenical Center in Geneva, at the United Nations, during the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board meeting and at other events to highlight the problem so that action can be taken. See page 10 for details of where and when you should send your letters.



Step 1: Learning about children, adolescents and HIV

Before young people write their letters, talk with them about HIV and AIDS and about access to testing and medicines for children and adolescents living with HIV. A list of useful resources is available online at www.oikoumene.org/faithonthefast-track

Share stories about children and adolescents living with HIV – perhaps a child living with HIV who is not receiving the medicines they need and another HIV-positive child who is. Talk about the differences in the stories. Try to include some information about children and adolescents living with HIV in your country and any issue they face with access to diagnosis and medication.

Children and young people will probably want to know how babies, children and young people get HIV, and they may ask how they can avoid getting HIV. Resources are available at www.oikoumene.org/faithonthefasttrack to help you talk about HIV prevention with children and youth.

Talk about the important role of pharmaceutical companies in the research and development of

medicines. Explain how pharmaceutical companies have discovered medicines such as aspirin and penicillin and how millions of lives have been saved by these discoveries.

Talk about the importance of getting babies and children tested for HIV. Explain why parents and care-givers should bring their HIV-exposed children for an HIV-test; go back to obtain a result; and be linked to health-care facilities for treatment, counselling and support immediately if they are positive. Also explain why parents and caregivers of infants whose exposure is unknown may want to bring their children to a health facility for testing if they show symptoms related to HIV. Information about early-infant diagnosis, children and adolescents' testing is available at www.who.int/hiv/topics/paediatric/en/.

Talk about the importance of receiving age-appropriate HIV information. This can help fight stigma and discrimination that is fuelled by ignorance; and promote testing and treatment among children and adolescents.

Speak to young people about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (see page 18)², and about the UN Declaration on Ending AIDS. Governments have committed themselves to doing everything they can to give children and adolescents the best health care possible. We need to remind them of their responsibilities.



2016 UN Political Declaration on Ending AIDS

A United Nations (UN) political declaration is a formal statement in which governments declare and commit to take specific actions and meet targets to promote, protect and fulfill the rights of people in their countries. Once a member state adopts a UN political declaration, its provisions must be reflected and incorporated into the country's policies and legislation.

The June 2016 United Nations Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS³ describes treatment levels for children and adolescents as “unacceptably low” and in response member state governments agreed that there should be: “special emphasis on providing 1.6 million children (0-14 years of age) with antiretroviral therapy by 2018 and that children, adolescents and adults living with HIV know their status and are immediately offered and sustained on affordable and accessible quality treatment to ensure viral load suppression and underscore in this regard the urgency of closing the testing gap”. This target for children 0-14 represents a near doubling of the number of children estimated to have obtained HIV treatment in 2016.

Member States also agreed to “Work towards ensuring that at least 81 per cent of the number of children and young adolescents (1.4 million children under the age of 15) are on treatment in 2020, in Asia and the Pacific reaching 95,000, in Eastern and Southern Africa reaching 690,000, in the Middle East and North Africa reaching 8,000, in Western and Central Africa reaching 340,000, in Eastern Europe and Central Asia reaching 7,600, in Latin America and the Caribbean reaching 17,000, and in Western and Central Europe and North America reaching 1,300, ensuring equal access to treatment for girls and boys”.

In addition, the Start Free, Stay Free and AIDS Free framework⁴, launched by PEPFAR, UNAIDS and partners after the adoption of the UN Political Declaration on Ending AIDS, sets ambitious targets for adolescents: provide 1.2 million adolescents (aged 15-19) living with HIV with antiretroviral therapy by 2018; provide 1 million adolescents (aged 15-19) with HIV treatment by 2020.

2. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

3. http://www.hlm2016aids.unaids.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/2016-political-declaration-HIV-AIDS_en.pdf

4. http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/Stay_free_vision_mission_En.pdf



Step 2: Putting pen to paper

Tell young people why campaigning is worth the effort: their letters, along with thousands of others from around the world, will be read by influential people in pharmaceutical and diagnostic companies, in government ministries, UN agencies and the media, and by religious leaders. These people have real power to make a difference for hundreds of thousands of HIV-positive children who have little or no access to age-appropriate HIV information, testing and treatment.

Young people's letters will also go on display at the United Nations and other international centers to remind people of the treatment targets for children and adolescents living with HIV set by all UN member states in the 2016 UN Political Declaration on Ending AIDS.

Young people should handwrite their own letters or send them by e-mail to their government health ministry, ministry of education or finance; to the pharmaceutical company or to the diagnostic company selected; or to their own Country's First Lady⁵. Not all the letters should be the same. Use the sample letters as a general guide, but encourage young people to use their own words (and even their own drawings) and to think about what concerns them personally. Suggest that young people include any particular issues relevant to their country. They may also have their own ideas about what action they think Ministries, First Ladies, pharmaceutical and diagnostic companies could take. There might be a specific question they want to raise, or a personal story they want to tell. Young people should thank the government or the companies for any HIV initiatives they have taken, in particular to improve access to testing and treatment for HIV positive children and adolescents.

You will need:

- Information on children and adolescents living with HIV; on testing and treatment for them; on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and on commitments taken by your government to promote, protect and fulfil the rights of children and adolescents
- Name and address of ministries of health, finance and education and/or e-mail addresses
- Name and address of CEOs of pharmaceutical companies and diagnostic companies and/or e-mail addresses (see www.oikoumene.org/faith-onthefasttrack)
- Name and address of your Country's First Lady and/or e-mail address (www.oafla.org)
- Postage (letters to pharmaceutical and diagnostic companies should all be sent to the WCC-EAA (FaihtontheFastTrack@wcc-coe.org) in Geneva; letters to the ministries and to the First Ladies should be sent directly to them (with a copy to the WCC-EAA))
- Information on specific requests for certain pharmaceutical and diagnostic companies, ministries and First Ladies (see www.oikoumene.org/faith-onthefasttrack)
- Pens and paper or computers/or other IT devices



2018 and 2020 treatment targets for children and adolescents

A Super-Fast-Track Framework for Ending AIDS among Children, Adolescents and Young Women by 2020

Start free

Every child deserves an HIV-free beginning.

- Eliminate new HIV infections among children by reducing the number of children newly infected to less than 40,000 by 2018 and 20,000 by 2020.
- Reach and sustain 95% of pregnant women living with HIV with lifelong HIV treatment by 2018.

Stay free

When children have an HIV-free start, we must support them to stay that way as they enter adolescence and age into adulthood.

- Reduce the number of new HIV infections among adolescents and young women to less than 100,000 by 2020.
- Provide voluntary medical circumcision for HIV prevention to 25 million additional men by 2020 globally with a focus on young men ages 10-29.

AIDS free

Everyone who is living with HIV should have access to anti-retroviral treatment to stay AIDS free and reduce their risk of onward transmission to an uninfected partner. Children and adolescents are easily left behind and the impact is devastating. Without treatment, children born with HIV are particularly vulnerable; 50% of them will die before their 2nd birthday, and 80% will die before age 5.

- Provide 1.6 million children (0-14 years) and 1.2 million adolescents (15-19) living with HIV with antiretroviral therapy by 2018.
- Provide 1.4 million children (0-14) and 1 million adolescents (15-19) with HIV treatment by 2020.

Start Free, Stay Free, AIDS Free (<https://free.unaids.org/>) is a collaborative framework to accelerate the end of the AIDS epidemic among children, adolescents and young women by 2020.

The Start Free, Stay Free, AIDS Free targets are ambitious, but reaching them is essential to ending the AIDS epidemic among children, adolescents and young women by 2020. The global community must super-fast-track its efforts to meet these urgent needs and change the trajectory of the AIDS epidemic once and for all.

5. OAFLA is the Organization of African First Ladies <http://www.oafla.org/>

Letters to pharmaceutical companies

Aim: To improve access to paediatric HIV treatment through letters written by young people, to a target group of pharmaceutical companies

Sample letter to pharmaceutical and generic companies:

[your name]

[your address]

[title and name of person and company you are writing to]

[address you are writing to]

[date]

Dear [title and surname],

Today at school we spoke about HIV and AIDS. The teacher told us that 2.1 million children around the world live with HIV and that they all need special combinations of medicines to feel better and protect them from falling ill. We heard that not many children living with HIV get the medicines they need. In 2016, 400 children were newly infected with HIV each day and 300 children died of AIDS-related causes daily.

The teacher explained to us that there are not enough formulations of drugs and testing equipment available for babies, children and adolescents living with HIV. Sometimes children and adolescents living with HIV have to take several pills each day which taste terrible or make them feel bad. Companies like yours are very important. Our teacher said that pharmaceutical companies can do a lot of good. Medicines like penicillin and aspirin have saved many lives and changed the history of the world. Many adults living with HIV have access to good quality treatment. Learning this made me a bit sad and angry. Why isn't more being done for babies and children living with HIV?

I would like your company to do more research and create new formulations of drugs to save more children's lives. We cannot forget children living with HIV just because most of them live in poor countries with few people to speak out for them.

[Add specific requests if desired, see also <https://www.paediatrichivactionplan.org/> and www.oikoumene.org/faithonthefasttrack]

I look forward to hearing from you about how more children living with HIV can be helped through your work.

Yours sincerely,

[Your signature]

[Your printed name]

Letters to diagnostic companies

Aim: to improve access to Early Infant Diagnosis and HIV testing for children and adolescents through letters written by young people to a target group of diagnostic companies

Sample letter to diagnostic companies:

[your name]

[your address]

[title and name of person and company you are writing to]

[address you are writing to]

[date]

Dear [title and surname],

I am writing to ask (Company name) to prioritize the need to test all children living with HIV.

More than 120,000 children die each year from AIDS-related causes, and over 13,000 children are newly infected each month. In 2016, only 43 per cent of HIV-exposed infants received an Early Infant Diagnosis (EID) test within the first two months of life. I once heard about an HIV-positive mother saying that she is still waiting for the HIV-test result of her 4 year old boy who was tested just few weeks after birth. He looks healthy but she is worried he might be living with HIV.

We could do so much to save the lives of many infants and children by providing early diagnosis and effective treatment to all HIV-infected children.

I am really grateful for the work of and for the products that your company has produced and placed in the market during the years. I'm writing to ask for your support as CEO for your company to take several actions:

First, it is important that (Company name) continues to produce the testing machines that can be used close to the children who most need them. Your machines are urgently needed in larger quantities; second, please make sure that the prices of the chemicals needed to use the testing machines are the same for all regions of the country and within my neighboring countries; third, please will you include the costs of the testing machines together with the costs of everything needed to carry out the tests such as the chemicals and the costs for maintaining the machines; fourth, please will you state clearly the conditions under which the testing machines must be operated so that they continue to perform successfully; and finally please make sure that the testing machines have clear instructions for accurately analysing the test results.

I look forward to hearing about the important innovations and commitments that (Company name) has taken to improve the quality of life of many children around the world.

I thank you, (name CEO Company), for the attention you can give to my letter.

Yours sincerely,

[your signature]

[your name]

When and where to send your letters

Deadline:

Letters should arrive in Geneva by December 2018. If you cannot meet this date, please still send your letters to keep up the pressure on pharmaceutical and diagnostic companies, and on governments.

Letters to pharmaceutical companies and diagnostic companies:

Please send the WCC-EAA your original letters to pharmaceutical and diagnostic companies. The WCC-EAA will send them on and follow up with companies on specific requests regarding medicines and diagnostic tests.

Letters to governments:

Please send government letters directly to your Minister of Health, Education or Finance; or to the First Lady of your Country, and send copies of these letters to the WCC-EAA.

World Council of Churches-Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (WCC-EAA)
Take Action for Children and Adolescents Living with HIV
P.O. Box 2100
150 route de Ferney
1211 Geneva 2
Switzerland

Sample letter to government Minister of Health

[your name]

[your address]

[title and name of person you are writing to]

Ministry of Health

[government address]

[date]

Dear [title and surname],

There are about 2.1 million children living with HIV around the world but many of these children do not have access to HIV treatment. An infant is infected with HIV somewhere in the world every 3 minutes while 2000 young people become infected with HIV each day.

Our country has signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child. As part of this, our government promised to do its best to make sure that all children in our country receive health care (article 24). This is not happening. It is very difficult to find out if a baby has HIV, and many children and adolescents have no access to HIV-testing. Also, there are not enough good combinations of medicines that can be used easily by babies and children. Children and adolescents living with HIV are often discriminated against and are afraid to take their drugs as others might find out that they are positive.

Therefore, I, along with many other young people around the world, am writing to you to ask you to keep the promises you have made to ensure that all children and adolescents living with HIV receive the medicines they need.

[Add your suggestions and questions on this issue].

Thank you for all that you are doing already for people living with HIV. We would really appreciate if you could share with us information on the number of babies, children and adolescents in need of treatment in our country; and if you could tell us what you are doing to make sure that the 2018 and 2020 treatment targets are reached.

Also, please let me know how I can help you in our country's response to the AIDS epidemic. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

[your signature]

[your name]

Sample letter to government Minister of Finance

[your name]

[your address]

[title and name of person you are writing to]

Ministry of Finance

[address you are writing to]

[date]

Dear [title and surname],

In the 2016 Political Declaration on Ending AIDS, adopted by all UN member states, each country has committed to ending the global AIDS epidemic as a public health threat by 2030. For this to happen, lots of resources are needed.

I have read that, in recent years, high-income countries have reduced funding for HIV and AIDS, and domestic funding for the HIV response now exceed funds provided by international donors. It seems that countries most affected by HIV must finance their own responses and find more efficient and cost-effective ways to do so. I understand this must be very challenging, but it can also foster ownership and accountability in the implementation of the national HIV response and it can increase sustainability.

When funding becomes scarce, we tend to forget children and their needs. I hope this is not happening in our country. I am really interested to know what is the HIV spending in (Country) national budget and what is specifically allocated to HIV prevention, testing, treatment care and support for children, adolescents and young people.

I thank you for all (Country) is doing to eliminate AIDS in children and adolescents and I look forward to hearing from you

Yours sincerely,

[your signature]

[your name]

Letters to Ministers of Health, Education and Finance

Aim: To ask Ministers of Health, Education and Finance to fight inequality and injustice affecting HIV-positive children and adolescents who are not receiving testing and treatment, and to ensure they receive age-appropriate HIV information.

The majority of governments of the world have ratified or acceded to (formally agreed and adopted) the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), recognizing the right of the child to the highest attainable standard of health. If you write to the USA you may want to ask them why they haven't done so and suggest they ratify the CRC.

All United Nations member states have adopted the 2016 UN Political Declaration on Ending AIDS: ask them to keep their commitment to provide 1.6 million children and 1.2 million of adolescents with antiretroviral therapy by the end of 2018; and to provide 1.4 million children and 1 million adolescents with life-long HIV treatment by 2020.



Sample letter to government Minister of Education

[your name]
[your address]

[title and name of person you are writing to]
Ministry of Education
[government address]
[date]

Dear [title and surname],
Each day there are new HIV infections among infants, adolescents, and young people, in particular girls. These infections show that people either aren't learning enough about HIV, or are unable or unwilling to act on it.
Education is an important component of preventing the transmission of HIV and promoting access to testing and treatment. Being informed about HIV also means that we can eliminate stigma and discrimination towards HIV-positive people and that our teachers and schools know how to support and integrate HIV-positive students. Education can improve the quality of life of children, adolescents and young people living with HIV and should never be denied.

[Share a personal story if you can, such as: One of my classmates stopped taking her medicines at school. First she tried to hide them. Then she interrupted the treatment for fear of the judgement of others. This is unjust. She got sick and could not follow the lessons for several months.]

We must learn how the virus is transmitted, but also how it is not transmitted. People need to know that they cannot become infected from sharing food, towels or toilets. This will help to reduce discrimination against positive people by reducing ignorance and fear. And it will help children and adolescents to remain on treatment.

Excellency, I am writing to you today to ask for:

- Age-appropriate HIV education in my school;
- Guidance to teachers about how to support HIV positive students;
- Measures to be put in place so that all children and adolescents, including girls, have access to good quality primary and secondary education; and
- Each school to be encouraged to organize HIV awareness days and events on occasion of World AIDS Day, on 1 December.

We believe that education is the key to an AIDS Free generation. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,
[Your signature]
[Your printed name]

Letters to First Ladies

OAFLA (<http://www.oafla.org/>) is the Organization of African First Ladies against HIV and AIDS. The vision of the Organization is of an Africa free from HIV and AIDS, maternal and child mortality where women and children are empowered to enjoy equal opportunities. African First Ladies are powerful voices to advocate for the rights of children and adolescents living with HIV.

Sample letter to First Ladies

[your name]
[your address]

[title and name of First Lady]
[government address]
[date]

Excellency,
I am really pleased to know that my country's First Lady is part of the Organization of African First Ladies against HIV and AIDS (OAFLA).
I'd like to praise you and all other members of the OAFLA for this important initiative and for having placed children, adolescents and HIV at the core of your mission.
I'd like to know more about the OAFLA activities that are taking place in (Country) and ask if I and my school (church, faith community) could be of any help to support the cause: like you, I want (Country) to be free from AIDS. I want all (Country) children and adolescents to have access to age-appropriate HIV information, testing and to the best treatment.

Please, keep speaking out against HIV-related stigma and discrimination affecting children, adolescents, and their caregivers at home, in schools, and in the community. This is a big issue in my community, which creates a lot of problems for people living with HIV.

Please keep encouraging mothers, fathers, families and caregivers of HIV-exposed infants and children to go for testing and know their status. And keep encouraging those who are HIV-positive, to seek counselling, treatment, care and support. Due to fear of stigma and discrimination, parents in my community are often afraid to bring their babies for an HIV test or families give up on treatment because it is too costly.

The age of consent shouldn't be a barrier to testing and treatment for adolescents. In (Country) the age of consent is (indicate the age of consent in your country). (You might want to ask to modify the age-of-consent in your country in case it limits access to HIV and other health services for adolescents.)

I'd like to invite you to my school (Church, place of worship) (suggest a day, it could be the Day of the African Child - 16 June; or Universal Children's Day - 20 November; or World AIDS Day - 1 December) for an awareness raising event. You and my Faith Leader (name) have the power to influence so many people: it would be great to have the two of you together to take action for children and adolescents.

Thank you for the consideration you are giving to my letter and thank you for what you are doing to eliminate stigma and discrimination against children and adolescents living with HIV; and to improve access to prevention, testing and treatment in (Country).

Yours sincerely,
[Your signature]
[Your printed name]

Step 3: Gaining media attention

Tips for approaching the media

The best way to inform the media about your letter writing is with a press release. Call your local newspaper or radio station and find out to whom you should send press releases. In the release, give some key facts about the issue and include a quote from a young person about why they are writing the letters. Give contact details of a key person in your school/group who will be acting as spokesperson to the media. Follow up your press release with a phone call a few days later to check that the press release has been received and to ask if the story will be covered.



The Response

Advocacy on children's access to HIV treatment has made a real difference already: the number of HIV positive children receiving treatment has increased during the past years. Yet, especially in Africa, there is still a long way to go. All children and adolescents living with HIV have the right to diagnosis and optimal child-friendly formulations of antiretroviral (the special drugs needed by people living with HIV), so we need to keep the pressure on governments, pharmaceutical companies to provide this.

In 2018 and 2021, world leaders will need to report on what they have done to make sure that babies, children and adolescents had access to age-appropriate HIV information, and to HIV testing and treatment.

We need to call on political leaders and on all leaders in our communities to fulfil their obligations to do all they can to protect the health of all children and adolescents including those living with HIV. We also need to pressure pharmaceutical companies to research, develop and make available affordable new fixed-dose-combinations of ARVs suitable for infants, children and adolescent, particularly in developing countries. And we need to pressure diagnostic companies to facilitate and make accessible rapid, reliable, cost-effective and accessible diagnostic products adapted for use in testing infants, children and adolescents in poor settings. Young people in particular can make an impact on governments, companies and media to make this happen.

We need your help!

Five million children aged 0-14 have died from AIDS-related illnesses since the start of the HIV epidemic; 91 per cent of them lived in sub-Saharan Africa. The majority of these deaths were preventable! We cannot remain indifferent to the 400 children who are newly infected with HIV each day and to the 300 children who die of AIDS-related causes daily. We cannot remain silent knowing that many adolescents do not receive proper information about HIV and AIDS; knowing that many children and adolescents face stigma and discrimination every day; and knowing that all these infections and deaths are entirely avoidable!

To change this situation, the WCC-EAA, in collaboration with partners around the world, is mobilizing faith leaders, representatives of faith-based organizations, children, adolescents and youth to speak out for and with children and adolescents living with HIV. Unless concrete action is taken now, hundreds of thousands more will become HIV-positive and die needlessly in the coming years.

With your help, we are embarking on an advocacy action with governments, pharmaceutical and diagnostic companies and media to promote the rights of children and adolescents to prevention, testing and treatment. Children and young people are invited to take action with their school, faith community or family to help make this happen.

We'd like to recognize your efforts!

It is the combined efforts of young people around the world that could really make the difference for children and adolescents with HIV. In recognition of this, we will award a certificate to each group that sends us feedback about their activities, along with copies of their letters. See page 10 for details of where and when to send your letters.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRS) is the first legally binding International Treaty governing children’s rights.

Article 24

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services.

2. States Parties shall pursue full implementation of this right and, in particular, shall take appropriate measures:

- (a) To diminish infant and child mortality;
- (b) To ensure the provision of necessary medical assistance and health care to all children with emphasis on the development of primary health care;
- (c) To combat disease and malnutrition, including within the framework of primary health care, through, inter alia, the application of readily available technology and through the provision of adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking-water, taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution;

- (d) To ensure appropriate pre-natal and post-natal health care for mothers;
- (e) To ensure that all segments of society, in particular parents and children, are informed, have access to education and are supported in the use of basic knowledge of child health and nutrition, the advantages of breastfeeding, hygiene and environmental sanitation and the prevention of accidents;
- (f) To develop preventive health care, guidance for parents and family planning education and services.

- 3. States Parties shall take all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children.
- 4. States Parties undertake to promote and encourage international co-operation with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the right recognized in the present article. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.



Take Action for Children and Adolescents Living with HIV

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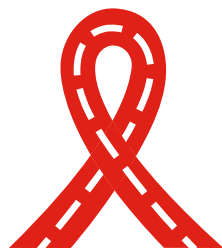
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