



## KEY MESSAGES OF THE MEXICO YOUTHFORCE

**RIGHTS: we have a right to comprehensive, accurate information and services to protect our sexual health.**

HIV is transmitted primarily through sex. Young people's access to comprehensive, evidence-based sex education and HIV prevention programs that are safe, confidential, welcoming, and free from stigma and discrimination are imperative in responding to the HIV epidemic. Young people must also have access to youth-friendly services for testing, treatment, and care from trained providers in convenient and affordable locations. Sexual and reproductive health knowledge gives young people the tools they need to make educated decisions regarding their own health and to prevent HIV infection.

HIV should be discussed from a young age by families, schools, and communities so that young people grow into adolescence with an understanding of the virus and the vulnerabilities particular to young people specific to gender, age, location, and sub-population.

**RESPECT: for our realities, our experiences, and our contributions.**

The realities of young people's lives must be taken into account in program and policy development and implementation. It is crucial to acknowledge the specific needs of marginalized young people who experience an increased risk of HIV transmission. The experiences and expertise of young people living with HIV (YLHIV), young men who have sex with men (MSMs), young injection drug users (IDUs), and young sex workers must be respected and included in program and policy development to ensure that they are relevant and effective.

In many parts of the world, injection drug use is fueling concentrated epidemics. Young IDUs need access to youth-friendly harm reduction programs that include needle and syringe exchanges, information about sexual health and HIV prevention, treatment (including substitution therapy), and support to protect themselves and their sexual partners. Young people living with HIV must have access to anti-retroviral treatment and complete health education with respect to HIV and AIDS so they are able to manage opportunistic infections and maintain their personal well-being. All young people have rights to information, education, services, and support, which they do not lose as a result of their HIV status.

**RESPONSIBILITY: together, we must create an environment where we have power over the decisions that affect our health and lives.**

Young people need a supportive and enabling environment with social norms that reinforce positive behaviors across generations. Local and global communities, governments, civil society, and young people themselves have a responsibility to make this environment a reality. Young people's experiences are diverse and many find themselves in circumstances that greatly limit their ability to practice safer sexual behavior, even with access to sexual health information. Poverty, gender inequality, racial and ethnic discrimination, homophobia and transphobia, education inequality, homelessness, substance abuse, transactional sex, and sexual violence must be addressed in partnership with young people.

**RESOURCES: we need training, mentorship, funding, and opportunities.**

Young people have knowledge, skills, and creative energy to make an invaluable contribution to the HIV and AIDS response, and must be involved in the design, implementation, and evaluation of HIV and AIDS programs and policies that affect their lives. Young people must have access to capacity building and leadership opportunities to facilitate their active contributions and be trained and empowered with skills to spread the information they have gained to their peers. This is particularly true for those young people most affected by the epidemic.

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The Mexico YouthForce promotes and facilitates meaningful youth participation and youth-adult partnerships to raise the visibility of youth HIV and AIDS issues before, during, and after the XVII International AIDS Conference through concrete action.

The Mexico YouthForce is a wide-ranging coalition of non-governmental and international organizations, coordinated by Advocates for Youth, Ave de Mexico, the Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS, TakingITGlobal, and Youth Coalition. The YouthForce is supported by UNFPA, UNESCO, UNICEF, the Summit Foundation, the Gates Foundation, and Plan International.