

Male engagement in the HIV response —a Platform for Action



Contents

| | |
|--|----------|
| Why men and boys? | 2 |
| The Platform for Action from the meeting | 4 |

Why men and boys?

Gender inequalities and harmful gender norms are important drivers of the HIV epidemic, and they are major hindrances to an effective HIV response. While access to HIV services for women and girls remains a concern, a growing body of evidence also shows that men and adolescent boys¹ have limited access to HIV services.

Current efforts to advance both gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights as key elements of the HIV response do not adequately reflect the ways that harmful gender norms and practices negatively affect men, women, and adolescent boys and girls in all their diversity. This in turn increases HIV-related vulnerability and risk among all of these groups.

There is an urgent need to reach men and adolescent boys with evidence-informed HIV prevention, voluntary testing and counselling, and treatment and care services that are informed by age-, sex- and geographically-disaggregated data (the know your epidemic, know your response approach).

However, that outreach cannot be achieved in isolation from the ongoing efforts to advance gender equality and change harmful gender norms, including eliminating gender-based violence. The future of the HIV response hinges on more rapid and profound progress toward gender equality, particularly as it affects the realms of health and HIV. Gender equality and gender-sensitive approaches must be integral parts of the policies and actions that drive the HIV response.

1 10–19 years old.

Efforts to advance gender equality must consider this complexity and the various ways that harmful gender norms affect men, women, and adolescent boys and girls in all their diversity.

Along with continuing the vital work to reach more women and girls with prevention, voluntary testing and counselling, treatment and care services, it is essential to learn from, scale up and build upon existing successful programmes that engage and reach men and adolescent boys as part of HIV and sexual and reproductive health responses. It is also crucial to continue challenging harmful gender norms. Ultimately, these are interlinked challenges, not a zero-sum trade-off, and there is an urgent need for action to challenge harmful gender norms that negatively impact the health of women and men, and to improve access to and use of HIV services for everyone.

There is a strong and growing evidence base that shows gender norms and relations can be transformed, but only by engaging men, women, and adolescent boys and girls.

In order to respond to these challenges, UNAIDS, Sonke Gender Justice and the International Planned

Parenthood Federation convened a high-level meeting called the Rights, Roles and Responsibilities of Men in Fast-Tracking the end of AIDS on 10 and 11 December 2015 at UNAIDS at UNAIDS headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

The meeting reviewed the latest evidence on the HIV epidemic among men and adolescent boys, their access to and use of HIV services, the responsiveness of health systems to their needs and the role of harmful gender norms in driving the HIV epidemic among men, women, and adolescent boys and girls.

It also examined promising approaches for challenging harmful gender norms that heighten HIV risks among men and women, and discussed best practices that can enhance access to and use of HIV and other health services among men.

During the meeting, a drafting group, comprised of representatives of Sonke Gender Justice, the International Planned Parenthood Federation, Promundo and UNAIDS, was convened to summarize the key areas for joint action, as agreed by the meeting participants. A four-point Platform for Action was agreed that will be critical to Fast-Track the end of the AIDS epidemic by 2030.

The Platform for Action from the meeting

Generate and use evidence for decision-making at the local level

- **Know your HIV epidemic at the local level.** Collect, analyse and disseminate HIV data of greater detail, and disaggregate those data by age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, work status and occupation, school enrollment and location (as relevant). Local data should be drawn from a variety of settings to guide effective, appropriate action. The data should be collected, used and disseminated in ways that respect and protect the confidentiality and safety of individuals.
- **Identify which men and adolescent boys are not being reached.** Collect, analyse and disseminate data that enhance understanding of available services and messages, of which men and adolescent boys are not using existing services, and of the reasons for that (including by leveraging existing knowledge-building processes, such as the All In to #EndAdolescentAIDS platform).
- **Analyse the gender dynamics.** Conduct analyses to understand how gender relations and other dynamics of power shape HIV risk and affect access to (and use of) health services for men, women, and adolescent boys and girls in all their diversity including among key populations, such as men who have sex with men, transgender women, sex workers and people who inject drugs.
- **Understand men's perceptions and utilization of current services.** Promote and strengthen gender-sensitive analysis of



evidence to understand the factors that shape access to and use of health services among men and adolescent boys in specific settings.

Expand access to and use of people-centred health services for men and adolescent boys, and strengthen community-led responses

- **Build on what works and engage existing networks and civil society groups.** Expand community-led approaches and programmes that are proven to work and mobilize support for collective action while also gathering data to inform and adapt future programming.
- **Adapt existing services.** Remove identified barriers, make services more attractive and responsive to the needs of men and adolescent boys in all their diversity, and expand those services. Actions should be based on reviews of evidence. Examples include training service providers and peer educators, integrating HIV and other health services, offering relevant services, and supporting and scaling up community-based HIV services.
- **Bring services closer to men and adolescent boys.** Focus on reaching men and adolescent boys with innovative service delivery methods in workplaces, places of worship, sports gatherings, schools and other community venues. Use similar approaches to challenge harmful gender norms. This is particularly important for reaching people who live in poorly serviced settings or people who are not in formal education or employment.

- **Monitor, evaluate and ensure accountability.** Use existing monitoring and accountability mechanisms to evaluate programmes (including for possible unintended consequences), and use the findings to improve services. Ensure that participatory monitoring and evaluation processes promote the sustainability of programmes.

Promote positive social norms to advance gender equality and improve the health of men, women, and adolescent boys and girls

- **Strengthen the policy framework.** Develop, adopt, implement and mobilize funding for evidence-informed policies and programmes that challenge harmful gender norms, increase support for gender equality among men and adolescent boys, use gender-sensitive approaches, reduce sexual and gender-based violence, and eliminate barriers and promote access to and use of health services among men and adolescent boys.
- **Advance comprehensive sexuality education.** Support the inclusion of comprehensive sexuality education with strong gender equality components in both primary and secondary schools. Promote and provide training for educators and in- and out-of-school adolescents and young people.
- **Communication and advocacy.** Use communication and advocacy tools, social media and other media outlets (including through worker and employers' unions, faith-

based networks, and sports, entertainment and traditional leadership structures) innovatively to challenge harmful gender norms.

- **End violence.** Address violence in all its forms (including in conflict settings), with a specific focus on ending sexual and gender-based violence including against children. Actions should involve guidance and support for scaled-up primary prevention to challenge harmful gender norms, programmes to support the survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, and programmes that engage perpetrators.

Sustain the HIV response through increasing community engagement, expansion of partnerships and scale-up of financing

- **Review and enforce the legal framework.** Advance gender equality and non-discrimination, guided by the findings and recommendations of the Global Commission on HIV and the Law.
- **Strengthen strategic alliances, partnerships and outreach.** Build collaboration at all levels, including with non-health ministries, the private sector, networks of key populations, youth organizations, trade unions, women's organizations and networks working with men and adolescent boys. A key aim should be to provide leadership and support for engaging men and adolescent boys to challenge harmful gender norms and improve their health-seeking behaviours.

- **Engage adolescents and young people as beneficiaries, partners and leaders.** Include adolescents and young people in the design, implementation and monitoring of programmes that are aimed at advancing gender equality, challenging harmful gender norms, and improving the health of men, women, and adolescent boys and girls in all their diversity through participatory platforms.
- **Scale up funding.** Increase funding in order to address the gender inequalities and harmful gender norms that are at the root of HIV vulnerability among men and women. Greater technical and financial resources are required, and these will need to be sourced more innovatively. The initiatives cannot rely entirely on traditional donors, nor can new programmes be supported from existing budgets without the risk of negatively affecting the situation of women and girls.

The Platform for Action offers a valuable space and opportunity for governments, civil society, academia, the United Nations and other development partners to collaborate and engage on addressing the barriers to men and boys accessing HIV and sexual and reproductive health services. In line with the above, a secretariat coordinated by Sonke Gender Justice has been set up. To contribute and join a virtual community for action please send an email to dean@genderjustice.org.za; remmy@genderjustice.org.za and govenderk@unaids.org.

Four-point Platform for Action



Copyright © 2016
Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)
All rights reserved.

The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNAIDS concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. UNAIDS does not warrant that the information published in this publication is complete and correct and shall not be liable for any damages incurred as a result of its use.

UNAIDS/JC2848E



UNAIDS
Joint United Nations
Programme on HIV/AIDS

20 Avenue Appia
1211 Geneva 27
Switzerland

+41 22 791 3666

unaids.org