PRESS RELEASE

Mali welcomes new generation of leaders for AIDS response

Young leaders empowered to lead change and hold policymakers accountable for future progress on HIV

Geneva, 15 April 2011—Over 100 young leaders from around the world are meeting in Bamako, Mali, for a three-day Global Youth Summit on HIV. The Summit, hosted by President Amadou Toumani Touré of Mali, is being held to create a new generation of leadership in the global AIDS response.

“Young people must take the leadership of the AIDS response, and they must be given the space to lead,” said President Touré, in the opening plenary of the Summit.

Despite the increase in the number of youth organizations and networks focusing on HIV, young people still face difficulties in influencing decision makers and in becoming engaged as equal partners in the AIDS response.

The Summit has been convened to empower young leaders, including young people living with HIV, to create a sustainable, youth-driven transformation of the AIDS movement. Participants will agree on strategies for young people to lead an HIV prevention revolution. They will also discuss ways of strengthening youth networks and uniting the youth and AIDS movements around the world.

“Today’s young people will assume the mantle for the next decade—ensuring social justice and equity,” said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). “Young people are defining the future of the global AIDS response and bringing new energy to the AIDS movement.

Participants will develop a Call to Action to empower young people and hold policymakers accountable for future progress on AIDS. This Call to Action will be launched online and will leverage the voices of young people in the lead-up to the United Nations High Level Meeting which is taking place in New York from 8-10 June 2011. “I am ready to take the Call to Action coming out of the Mali Youth Summit on HIV to the High Level Meeting at the United Nations,” said President Touré.

“We are forging a network of young leaders to take ownership of the AIDS response. We are committed to using all available options to advocate for world leaders to redouble their commitment to the AIDS response at the High Level Meeting on AIDS in June," said Eunwoo Kim, co-chair of the steering committee of the Mali Youth Summit on HIV.

In 2009, people aged 15-24 accounted for 41% of new HIV infections among adults. Young women are particularly vulnerable to HIV, accounting for 64% of infections among young people worldwide. Data also show that young people are leading a prevention revolution by adopting safer sexual practices. The rate of new HIV infections in young people has fallen by more than 25% in 15 of the most severely affected countries.

[END]

Contact

UNAIDS Mali | Abdoul Karim Ben Wahab | tel. +(223) 66 752 728 | benwahaba@unaids.org

UNAIDS Geneva | Sophie Barton-Knott | tel. +41 22 791 1697 | bartonknotts@unaids.org

UNAIDS

UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, is an innovative United Nations partnership that leads and inspires the world in achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. Learn more at unaids.org.