

# Breaking the Silence

Advocacy  
Sheet  
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Preventing HIV/AIDS in Latin American and Caribbean Adolescents and Youth

## The WHO/UNAIDS 3X5 Initiative: What is it?

The World Health Organization and UNAIDS developed a global initiative to promote greater access to antiretroviral therapy among 3 million people living with HIV/AIDS in developing countries by the end of 2005.



## What are PAHO's Strategic Orientations for Implementing the 3X5 Initiative in the Americas?

- Political commitment and leadership, partnerships and community mobilization
- Strengthening of health systems and services
- Effective, reliable supply of medicines, reagents and commodities
- Links with prevention within health services
- Strategic information and reapplying lessons learned

## Why Should you Include Young People in your Country's 3X5 Initiative?

- HIV disproportionately affects adolescents and youth: More than half of those newly infected with HIV today are between 15 and 25 years old, and 20-30% of reported AIDS cases occur in young people between the ages of 10 and 24 (UNAIDS, 2002<sup>1</sup>)
- Adolescents with the most vulnerability to contracting HIV include those living in poverty; those without access to health and social services; homeless youth and youth in jail or juvenile detention centers; adolescent males who are attracted to or have sexual relations with other males; adolescent women who have dropped out of school



- Many drug users at risk of contracting HIV are young; for example, in Uruguay, 47% of HIV cases occur in intravenous drug users ages 15 to 24 (Instituto IDES, 2003<sup>2</sup>)
- Youth are more likely than adults to adopt and maintain healthy sexual behaviors, making them a key element in prevention and care activities, and a powerful resource in the fight against HIV
- Youth themselves can reach out to other young people through peer counseling, driving home the need to become informed and protect themselves

<sup>1</sup> AIDS Epidemic Update

<sup>2</sup> Prácticas de riesgo y prevalencia de infecciones por VIH, hepatitis B, C y sífilis

# What Effective Advocacy Strategies can you Use to Prevent HIV in Youth?

Latin American youth are a heterogeneous group. Because of this diversity, young people in Latin America do not have the same vulnerability to HIV infection across the board. Keeping these differences in mind, if HIV/AIDS prevention and care programs for youth are to be effective we need to:

- Target highly-vulnerable youth 10 to 24 years old who are using or at risk of using drugs, both injected and non-injected; at risk of HIV and STI infection; living with HIV/AIDS; affected by HIV/AIDS
- Support evidence-based, community-based HIV/STI prevention programs, particularly in out of school youth, gay, lesbian and transgender youth, immigrant youth, youth in detention and foster care, runaways and sex workers (CDC 2003. "HIV Prevention Strategic Plan through 2005")  
<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/partners/PSP/Objective3-4.htm>
- Reduce sexual risk taking connected with substance use
- Improve screening, diagnosis and treatment of HIV/STI among youth people
- Implement and evaluate evidence-based programs for constructive family communication around sexual behavior
- Implement and evaluate biomedical HIV prevention programs for youth, such as vaccines, topical microbicides (vaginal and rectal) and post exposure prophylaxis



## What YOU can do at the Country Level to Promote the 3X5 Initiative among Youth

- Be a leader, mobilize your community, build partnerships and seek political commitment for youth sexual health promotion, HIV/AIDS prevention and care
- Work with health care providers who have direct access to youth
- Develop strategies geared specifically toward youth, letting them know they have a right to receive information and confidential services
- Help identify the gaps in quality health services provision for adolescents in your community
- Help obtain data regarding the amount of sexually-active youth who need condoms to adopt safer sex practices, as well as the number of young people living with HIV/AIDS in need of medication
- Help obtain youth HIV/AIDS data disaggregated by age
- Request HIV/AIDS prevention services for adolescents and youth within the health services existing in your community
- Request information from health services authorities regarding the evidence that supports existing sexual health promotion and HIV/AIDS prevention programs for young people in your community