



Human Rights at the Heart of Ending AIDS

The Universal Coalition of Affirming Africans Uganda joins the rest of the world to commemorate the world AIDS Day under the theme: “Take the rights path: My health, my right!”. The community of people Living with HIV (PLHIV) in Uganda, in their diversities come together to reflect on progress made, honor those who have lost their lives to HIV/AIDS, and reaffirm our commitment to ending AIDS by 2030. This year’s theme emphasizes the need for urgency in our collective efforts to end HIV as a public health threat by 2030. While progress has been made, significant challenges remain, and it is clear that we must act together to achieve the goal of ending AIDS by 2030. With human rights at the center, and communities leading, the world can end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030. The substantial progress that has been made in the HIV response is directly linked to progress in protecting human rights. In turn, the progress made through the HIV response has galvanized broader progress in realizing the right to health and strengthening health systems but gaps in the realization of human rights for all are keeping the world from getting on the path that ends AIDS and are hurting public health, and now a surge in attacks on rights is threatening to undermine the progress that has been made.

Ending AIDS requires that we reach and engage everyone who is living with, at risk of or affected by HIV especially people who have been most excluded and marginalized. Acceptance, respect and love for marginalized populations are vital in the battle against AIDS. Laws, policies and practices that punish, discriminate against or stigmatize people obstruct access to HIV prevention, testing, treatment and care services.

There is an urgent need to remove criminal and other laws which harm people’s rights, and an equally urgent need to enact laws and policies which uphold the rights of every Ugandan.

UCAA-UG extends our appreciation to the Ministry of Health, Uganda AIDS Commission, and development partners for their ongoing efforts to combat HIV especially among key and vulnerable populations. However, we must continue to work together to ensure that every person living with HIV, regardless of their sexual identity, is able to live a healthy, dignified life, free from discrimination.

Upholding of everyone’s human rights is a key component of an effective HIV response. This World AIDS Day is a call to action to protect everyone’s health by protecting everyone’s rights. Leaders need to take the rights path and stop passing and implementing laws and policies that discriminate and violate people’s right to health.