



Preamble

In 1992, in response to the AIDS pandemic, the **International Federation of Medical Students' Associations** established its new Standing Committee devoted to working on interventions concerning HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and to support people living with HIV (PLHIV) through working to decrease stigma and discrimination. Currently, the Standing Committee on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, including HIV & AIDS, works on many issues, and the leading role in the management and support of HIV-related activities holds the Program Coordinator on HIV, AIDS and other STIs. The IFMSA also holds a well-established workshop for its members called HIV Education and Advocacy Training (HEAT).

Between 2018 and 2021, 94 activities (on a local and national level) have addressed the topic of HIV and AIDS, targeting medical students, healthcare professionals, the general population and PLHIV. Most of them focused on education and capacity building and were conducted mostly as campaigns. More than 150.000 people benefited from the IFMSA and their National Member Organizations' activities in the last three terms. Within that same timeframe, four activities (on a regional and international level) have also addressed HIV and AIDS, contributing to the impact generated by local and national activities. International efforts by IFMSA include the annual World AIDS Day online campaign and the release of the HIV Education and Advocacy Training (HEAT) Manual. The IFMSA also participates in external meetings that reflect the importance of HIV response, particularly ICASA, IAS Conference, High-Level Meeting on AIDS and World Health Assembly.

The **International Pharmaceutical Students' Federation**, which represents pharmacy students and recent graduates worldwide, has been at the forefront of the fight against HIV, hosting numerous HIV awareness campaigns on the World AIDS Day. Through these campaigns, IPSF has reached over 120,000 people from diverse backgrounds, educating them on the importance of HIV prevention and care. IPSF's HIV campaign kit, developed in 2016, has been a valuable resource for creating effective HIV awareness campaigns. This kit provides strategies for reaching out to different audiences, designing effective messaging, and measuring campaign success. IPSF's commitment to ending HIV does not stop at awareness campaigns. The organization has also attended high-level meetings on HIV and AIDS, including the UN High-Level Meeting on AIDS. IPSF's policy paper on HIV and booklet on HIV provide detailed recommendations and resources for health professionals and communities to help respond to the HIV epidemic. Through its tireless efforts, IPSF is making a meaningful impact on the lives of young people worldwide, helping to create a world where HIV is no longer stigmatized, and care is universally accessible. As IPSF's public health portfolio continues to expand, we now have



a program director on HIV and AIDS. With this expansion, we envision more stakeholders could be reached through our policy and advocacy work on HIV.

Healthcare students' impact in building more inclusive, non-judgemental societies, reducing HIV prevalence by raising awareness and creating more accessible and quality healthcare services for PLHIV is undeniable. The work of IPSF and IFMSA is a kernel of HIV response worldwide. Our immense efforts in HIV advocacy, however, are one of many reasons why young people, in particular healthcare students, are an important voice in the global AIDS architecture.

The involvement of healthcare students in the global AIDS response is essential in addressing the unique challenges facing young people living with HIV and young key populations. With their unique skill sets and perspectives, healthcare students can help bridge gaps in knowledge and understanding of the epidemic and bring innovative solutions to the table.

As students, they have the advantage of being up-to-date on the latest research, technologies, and trends in healthcare and have the skills to apply this knowledge to address the ongoing challenges of HIV&AIDS. As young people themselves, healthcare students also bring a unique perspective to the HIV response. They understand the needs and concerns of their peers and can serve as powerful advocates for HIV prevention and care in their communities. They also help break down the barriers to accessing resources and support, which are often rooted in misinformation, financial difficulties, disabling legal and policy environments, and HIV-related stigma. Moreover, healthcare students have been at the forefront of the AIDS response, providing care and support to affected individuals and communities. Their experience in working with PLHIV and their families gives them a firsthand understanding of the challenges and complexities of managing the disease. This is important because young people are disproportionately affected by HIV. By involving youth in decision-making, we can ensure that their unique needs and perspectives are taken into account.

Involving healthcare students in global AIDS decision-making processes provides them with invaluable training opportunities. Including youths in the decision-making process not only empowers them to think critically and creatively but also allows them to be part of the solution to eliminating HIV in the global community. They gain hands-on experience in public health policy, program planning, and advocacy, all of which can enhance their skills and prepare them for future leadership roles in healthcare. By involving healthcare students in the global



AIDS response, we provide a platform to nurture a new generation of healthcare professionals equipped with the knowledge, skills, and passion for tackling the HIV epidemic. These future leaders will be essential in developing and implementing innovative, human rights-based, gender transformative and inclusive approaches to prevent new infections and improve treatment outcomes and the quality of life of those most affected by HIV while building stronger healthcare and community systems, both locally and globally.

Healthcare students are the future healthcare providers who will be responsible for promoting evidence-based, people-centered, holistic and integrating approaches to end the HIV epidemic. By involving them in global AIDS decision-making processes, we ensure that this knowledge and experience they gain can be carried forward into their future careers, allowing them to serve better the people living with HIV, the key populations and the larger community. It also ensures that people-centered care is prioritized and the unique needs of people living with HIV and key populations are addressed. For example, healthcare students play a vital role in improving HIV-related health outcomes through their involvement in free clinics and providing low-cost quality improvement measures, such as free HIV testing and counseling. By offering these services, they facilitate early detection and diagnosis, leading to timely treatment and care initiation, thereby improving individual health outcomes and contributing to preventing and controlling HIV transmission. Additionally, healthcare students are committed to providing accessible and affordable care, ensuring that individuals can access vital services without financial barriers, regardless of their socioeconomic status. Their dedication to holistic care and addressing patients' physical, emotional, and psychosocial needs fosters a patient-centered approach, creating an environment of trust, empathy, and support, which is crucial for effective HIV management. Their involvement in HIV-related initiatives significantly enhances the well-being of individuals affected by HIV and supports global efforts to combat the virus. Overall, young people are the carrier of values based on human rights, equity, and social justice. By involving healthcare students in the global AIDS response, we can help to address health disparities among left-behind populations disproportionately affected by HIV by promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion in access to healthcare services.

Finally, meaningful youth engagement requires collaboration across different sectors and disciplines. By involving healthcare students in decision-making, we can promote interdisciplinary collaboration between healthcare, public health, policy, and other fields, which can lead to more comprehensive and effective strategies for addressing the HIV epidemic.



The International Federation of Medical Students' Associations and International Pharmaceutical Students Federation, participating in The PACT and The Global Partnership for Action to Eliminate All Forms of HIV-Related Stigma and Discrimination, present the *Declaration of Commitment of Healthcare Students' Response to HIV*.

Declaration of Commitment

We, the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations and International Pharmaceutical Students Federation, commit to:

- Build capacities of our members on the medical and sociocultural aspects concerning HIV and AIDS, including stigma, discrimination, key populations and prevention.
- Advocate for designing and implementing comprehensive medical education curricula that equip students with the required knowledge and skills to provide high-quality, people-centered, gender transformative and discrimination-free health services to people living with and most vulnerable to HIV.
- Advocate for inclusion of HIV intervention packages within universal health coverage, implementing harm reduction programs and holistic approach to people living with HIV and key populations, ensuring they have equitable access to chronic care on NCDs, including mental health, SRHR, and helping them achieve the highest attainable quality of life.
- Capacitate and encourage our members to advocate on the national level for abolishing discriminatory and criminalizing laws against PLHIV and key populations, increasing investment in HIV response, establishing affordable and accessible prevention, treatment and harm reduction interventions, designing strategies to reduce health inequalities and addressing the needs of key populations.



- Support and encourage our members to conduct activities and initiatives that aim to dissipate misinformation, end stigma and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination toward people living with HIV at all levels and build more equitable health and community systems, curricula and training.
- Foster the environment of respectful, sensitive, and prejudice-free communication with and about people living with HIV and key populations by educating our members on inclusive language, emotional responsibility and non-judgemental thinking, as well as implementing accountability measures.
- Develop research skills of our members so they can actively participate in research related to HIV prevention, vaccine, treatment and addressing stigma.
- Promote meaningful engagement of communities, especially young people, in designing, implementing and evaluating HIV-related interventions and decision-making.
- Collect data on their local, national, regional and international interventions to measure impact, share good practices, and evaluate and improve the activities on HIV.
- Strengthen collaboration with community- and youth-led organizations working on HIV and with people living with HIV to maximize the efforts to end AIDS by 2030, repeal discriminatory laws and policies, and eradicate stigma and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.
- Expand the multisectoral and multi-professional approach to their HIV action by conducting initiatives involving organizations and individuals from experience in various fields, including healthcare professions, psychology, research, economy, politics, law, community engagement and media.

We recognize the importance of our unique perspectives as healthcare students and the value we bring to the HIV response.

We are committed to playing a significant role in the global effort to end AIDS and support the health and well-being of people living with HIV and those most at risk and vulnerable to HIV.



References:

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