

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



WORLD
AIDS
DAY

YOUTH
AGAINST
AIDS

AN INITIATIVE OF OHHHIF FOUNDATION

Dear Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus,
Dear World Leaders,
Dear World Citizens,

Today's youth will inherit some of the greatest global challenges humanity has ever faced. The HIV epidemic does not need to be one of them.

Infection with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus is preventable, treatable and, with proper medication, untransmittable. You have said it yourself, Dr. Tedros: we have all the tools we need to end this epidemic.

Yet in 2021, 1.5 million people became newly infected with HIV. Around the world, 38.4 million people live with the virus. 1.7 million of them are children younger than 15, half of whom are not receiving lifesaving treatment.

If we have the tools, why are we so off course?

Today, HIV is an epidemic of the mind. Our adversary is not a biological virus living in people's bodies, but our own thoughts and attitudes.

For too many, "HIV" means stigma. These three letters carry more than four decades of shame, prejudice and false beliefs. For those living with HIV and those at risk of infection, this stigma acts as a barrier to knowledge, protection, and health care. It stifles conversation surrounding the virus and creates a silence that allows HIV to spread far more easily than it should. A virus is not responsible for this. We are.

To end the epidemic, we need to change how the world views HIV. That is why we must rename it.

When we change the way we speak, we change the way we think. The term "HIV" is lethal. The virus, now more of a chronic disease, does not need to be. A new name would help the world see HIV as it is today: a global challenge that science, together with society, can overcome. A new name could help us look to the future, not the past.

When we change the way we speak, we change the way we think. And for us to end the HIV epidemic, that needs to happen.

Let's change the name. Let's end the stigma. Forever.

Yours,
Youth Against AIDS

Bongwiwe Ndlovu

Daniel Nagel

Andiswa Thandolwethu Cindi

Roman Malessa

Anna Konopka-Feiler



PROPOSE YOUR NEW NAME
FOR HIV TODAY:

UPDATE **HIV**.COM