

PRESS RELEASE

New media and technologies pave the way for the future of HIV prevention

Stellenbosch/Geneva, 2 May 2011—The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and Stellenbosch University have brought together technology leaders, AIDS activists, social media experts and young people to discuss how social media and mobile technologies can be leveraged for HIV prevention.

The event, which is taking place at the Stellenbosch University in South Africa, is being held to find new ways of reaching young people with information about how to prevent HIV. This is particularly important at a time when globally only 1 in 3 young people have complete knowledge of how HIV is transmitted and 7000 people are becoming newly infected each day.

“We must engage young people in defining the prevention interventions that work for them,” said UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé. “The potential of social media and mobile technologies to re-energize the AIDS movement is clear. We need nothing less than an HIV prevention revolution, with social media and mobile technology at its core.”

The Internet and social media are widely used around the world, particularly by young people. Data released recently by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) shows that there are 333 million mobile telephone users in Africa and 77 million Internet users. Nigeria alone has 44 million people connected to the Internet.

Social media and mobile technology can be used effectively to raise awareness about HIV and provide correct information on HIV prevention. They also lend themselves to facilitating peer-to-peer education and discussions about HIV and creating social movements calling for action.

“The point where social media and mobile technology converge with innovation is where we need to focus our collective efforts in the HIV prevention response to ensure that our young people are not left behind in our endeavour to halt the spread of this epidemic,” said Prof. Jan du Toit, Director of the African Centre for HIV/AIDS Management at Stellenbosch University.

The discussions are being livestreamed and will include question and answer sessions via Facebook at www.facebook.com/unaids and on Twitter (@UNAIDS).

“Effective use of social media and mobile technology in this field will bring hope to a generation whose future continues to be threatened by HIV,” said Prof. Russel Botman, Rector and Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University.

The event is part of UNAIDS’ strategy to inspire and catalyze young people to use social media to ignite an HIV prevention revolution. It forms part of a series of events taking place in and around Cape Town and Stellenbosch on the occasion of the first meeting of the UNAIDS High Level Commission on HIV Prevention. Other events include a meeting of a new generation of AIDS activists with the HIV prevention commission on Robben Island on 3 May and a condom march, led by the Treatment Action Campaign, on 4 May in Khayelitsha.

UNAIDS’ vision: Zero new HIV infections. Zero discrimination. Zero AIDS-related deaths.

[END]

Contact

UNAIDS Johannesburg | Bathsheba Okwenje | tel. +27 82 909 2638 | okwenjeb@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.