

## PRESS STATEMENT

### **16 Days of Activism: UNAIDS calls for action to keep girls in school and eliminate gender-based violence**

**GENEVA, 25 November 2016**—In support of the annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, which begins on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and ends on 10 December, Human Rights Day, UNAIDS is calling for urgent action to keep girls in school, end gender-based violence and reduce girls' vulnerability to HIV.

Making sure that girls have access to schooling, particularly secondary education and comprehensive sexuality education, drastically reduces their risk of unintended pregnancy and infection with HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. It can also play a central role in empowering girls and young women to prevent gender-based violence.

“Adolescent girls and young women must have access to the information they need to make confident decisions about their health, their bodies and their future,” said UNAIDS Executive Director, Michel Sidibé.

A new report released by UNAIDS ahead of World AIDS Day on 1 December, *Get on the Fast-Track: the life-cycle approach to HIV*, shows that 15–24 years of age is an extremely dangerous time for women. In 2015, around 7500 young women became infected with HIV every week. Young women who have no formal education are twice as likely to become infected with HIV than young women who have some schooling.

Educated young women have more opportunities in the labour market and are more likely to be financially independent. In general, they marry at a later age and have children when they are older and are better equipped for the challenges of raising a family. The realization of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights and the advancement of women's empowerment are crucial to reducing the impact of the HIV epidemic.

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#### **UNAIDS**

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. UNAIDS unites the efforts of 11 UN organizations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank—and works closely with global and national partners towards ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. Learn more at [unaids.org](http://unaids.org) and connect with us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and YouTube.