



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,  
Director-General of UNESCO  
on the occasion of World AIDS Day**

**1 December 2017**

On this *World AIDS Day*, UNESCO and the UNAIDS Joint Programme join together to call for a world where every woman and man is able to realize the highest attainable standard of health, free from stigma and discrimination.

For this, we must ensure the right to quality education for all, because these two goals – health and education – go hand in hand. This linkage stands at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UNAIDS 2016-2021 Strategy.

As outlined in UNESCO's *Strategy on Education for Health and Well-Being: Contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals*, health and education are mutually reinforcing: healthy learners learn better, and better-educated learners are healthier.

They are also mutually dependent -- without the right to education we cannot truly fulfil the right to health. There is good evidence that education is strongly linked to health outcomes, as well as to determinants of health, such as health behaviours, risk contexts and use of preventive services. Studies have found that adolescents who receive good quality comprehensive sexuality education, combined with counselling by a trained professional, were 40 percent less likely to have an early or unintended pregnancy and 30 percent more likely to have graduated from high school. This translates to better long-term health outcomes, including a significantly reduced risk of HIV. This means thousands of lives saved, when you consider that over 70,000 adolescents in developing countries die annually of causes related to pregnancy and childbirth.

In a world where young people -- especially girls and young women -- bear a disproportionate burden of HIV and AIDS, we all must recognize that comprehensive sexuality education is central to their right to health, and to the health of all societies.

Today, I call on all partners to join forces to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030, as part of our commitment to promoting sustainable development and advancing human rights, gender equality and social justice.

Audrey Azoulay