

Call to Action:
#UHCLastMileFirst

[Put the last mile first](#) to accelerate Universal Health Coverage for all

Advocates are uniting in this global call to action to urge Member States to support key and vulnerable populations at the United Nations High-Level Meeting (HLM) on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) on 23 September 2019 by pledging:

- **Universal Health Coverage must offer access to affordable, quality health care for key and vulnerable populations, including gay men and other men who have sex with men, sex workers of all genders, people who use drugs, transgender people, people living with HIV, and adolescent girls and young women.**
- **We are committed to implementing international human rights law on the right to the highest attainable standard of health, and Sustainable Development Goal 3 on Health and Well-being for all. We will respect, protect, promote, and fulfil the rights of key and vulnerable populations.**
- **Putting the last mile first is the only way to achieve full UHC and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**

The UN HLM on UHC will adopt the *political declaration on universal health coverage* on 23 September 2019, but the draft is unforgivably weak on right to health and inclusion of key and vulnerable populations.

Although new HIV infections have dropped 18% globally, UNAIDS estimates 47% of new infections are among key populations.ⁱ Meeting the targets in the HIV Prevention 2020 Road Mapⁱⁱ to reduce new HIV infections from 1.7 million to 500,000 by next year will be impossible if key and vulnerable populations are excluded.

Global health and development priorities have shifted from disease-specific targets to achieving UHC, which is enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Goal 3 on health, alongside the commitment to end AIDS by 2030. Halfway to that goal, the world is off track.

Widespread criminalization of key populations undermines the right to health. As of 2018, 68 countries criminalized HIV non-disclosure, exposure or transmission.ⁱⁱⁱ 68 countries currently criminalize same-sex relations.^{iv} Drug use and possession for personal use are criminalized in most countries. Sex work is criminalized in 208 countries and dependencies.^v Trans people are criminalized and prosecuted in at least 57 countries.^{vi}

Stigma, discrimination, violence, and criminalization of key and vulnerable populations create major barriers to accessing health care services. Arrests, abuse, violence, and extortion all spark fear of seeking healthcare services, making key and vulnerable populations hardest to reach. How can universal health coverage be truly universal if these barriers remain unchallenged?

We ask Member States to speak up for and champion key and vulnerable populations during the UN HLM on UHC.

But our work doesn't stop there.

We need to work together towards a legally and socially enabling environment for all people to access healthcare without stigma, discrimination, violence, and criminalization. This means we must remove legal and policy barriers, and eliminate human rights violations committed against these groups with impunity. Criminalization restricts the right to access to health services that all people are entitled to.

Civil society, especially key and vulnerable populations, must be seen as key partners in the development, implementation, and monitoring of national UHC plans in order to ensure access for all, and achieve the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

By working together, UN Member States and communities can drive forward a progressive strategy for UHC that ensures everyone has access to the services they need to live healthy lives. Together, we must ensure that governments are held accountable to respect, promote, protect, and fulfill the right to health in the implementation of UHC and to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We urge you to join us and put the last mile first in UHC by committing to support key and vulnerable populations, including those criminalized, at the HLM.

Thank you.

ⁱ UNAIDS. 18 July 2018. [UNAIDS warns that progress is slowing and time is running out to reach the 2020 HIV targets.](#)

ⁱⁱ UNAIDS. 2017. [HIV Prevention 2020 Road Map.](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ UN Development Programme (UNDP). 2018. [Global Commission on HIV and the Law: Risks, Rights and Health: Supplement.](#)

^{iv} International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Association (ILGA). 2019. [State-sponsored homophobia report.](#)

^v Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP). 2019. [Global mapping of sex work laws.](#)

^{vi} Transgender Europe (TGEU). 2019. [Transrespect Criminalisation and Prosecution of Trans People Map.](#)