

AIDS 2024

THE 25TH INTERNATIONAL AIDS CONFERENCE

Munich Youth Force Highlights



MUNICH YOUTH FORCE

International AIDS Conference 2024



For AIDS 2024, the 25th International AIDS Conference, LetsStopAIDS (LSA) and the Global Network of Young People Living with HIV (Y+ Global) were selected as co-conveners of the Youth Force. Hosted in Munich, Germany, these two well-established, youth-led organisations were responsible for organising the Youth Pavilion and its agenda, ensuring that the voices, needs, and concerns of young people living with and affected by HIV were seen, heard and represented at this year's conference. Representatives from various youth-led organisations globally joined the Youth Force, with over 25 organisations involved.

Supported by the International AIDS Society, the Munich Youth Force (MYF), under the theme **"Breaking Barriers, Building Power, and Forging Alliance,"** orchestrated youth-focused initiatives at the Youth Pavilion. These efforts amplified the voices, contributions, and impacts of young people living with and affected by HIV. MYF members chose these priorities to engage youth in dismantling barriers to the HIV response, tackle existing and emerging stigma and other forms of discrimination, enhance education and healthcare services, and advocate for policy reform. Additionally, the MYF used the conference as a means to empower youth-led organisations and establish strategic partnerships to strengthen youth-led responses to HIV and sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) through collaborative efforts and sustainable funding.

The AIDS 2024 conference took place from July 22 to 26, preceded by a pre-conference on July 20 and 21, centered around the theme **"Putting People First."** This theme emphasised the importance of developing inclusive, people-centred approaches to the HIV response. The MYF, which hosted the Youth Pavilion, helped create a space for young people to share updates, experiences,

local, regional and globally led initiatives, programmes and more. The Youth Pre-Conference, which occurred before the main event, set a precedent for the main conference, which covered essential strategies for identifying and addressing barriers to meaningful youth engagement, empowerment, and sustaining strong partnerships within the HIV response.

Over several months, LSA and Y+ Global collaborated to create strategies and implement youth-oriented events, sessions, and advocacy efforts at the Youth Pavilion. This partnership led to the effective organisation of workshops and panel discussions, the building and creation of spaces within the Youth Pavilion, and other interactive activities designed to enhance youth leadership and involvement in the HIV response.

MYF comprises over 40 members and is distributed among working groups and a steering committee. Young leaders and advocates of youth movements were involved in the steering committee, proudly representing more than 20 nations and over 25 influential organisations globally. These organisations included UNAIDS, PEPFAR, STOPAIDS, EGPAF, Teenergizer, ReShape, GALZ, Frontline AIDS, UNFPA, NYP+, The PACT, Human Touch Foundation, RNJ+, ICW Global, ECOM, Youth Lead, ReShape, Youth Voices Count, Inti Muda Indonesia, Trinidad and Tobago Community for Positive Women and Girls Living with and Affected by HIV, and Y-PEER APC.

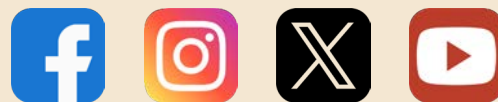
The conference's success was rooted in the values of partnership, collaboration, diversity, and sustainable investment. A steering committee was established in preparation for the conference, and six working groups were created.

The six working groups were the following:



Youth leadership was at the cornerstone of the Munich Youth Force partnership. The Youth Force was tasked to effectively design and implement youth-centred events, sessions, and advocacy initiatives throughout the conference. To promote meaningful youth participation and involvement, they committed to sharing relevant resources, expertise, and networks to maximise the impact of the Munich Youth Force. This includes sharing promotional materials, leveraging organisational networks, and facilitating the participation of youth advocates from across the globe whilst ensuring diversity and inclusion were at the foundation of decision-making.

In the lead-up to the conference, key messages, updates, and newsletters were shared on Youth Force's social media accounts, including **Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), and YouTube.**



To mobilise resources for activities at the Youth Pavilion, which promotes inclusiveness through safe spaces, games, recording studies like podcasts and videos, and art installations, MYF successfully obtained generous contributions from ViiV Positive Healthcare, the Global Fund, Gilead Sciences, and Hivos. The Munich Youth Force would like to thank the donors for their continued support and for putting young people first!

THANK YOU

The Munich Youth Force expresses its deepest gratitude to our donors and supporters for believing in our vision and supporting us with the Youth Pavilion and its activities. We could not have achieved our goals without your support.

MUNICH YOUTH FORCE
International AIDS Conference 2024



THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE MUNICH YOUTH FORCE.

MUNICH YOUTH FORCE
International AIDS Conference 2024



THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE MUNICH YOUTH FORCE.

MUNICH YOUTH FORCE
International AIDS Conference 2024



THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE MUNICH YOUTH FORCE.

MUNICH YOUTH FORCE
International AIDS Conference 2024



Watch the Munich Youth Force Highlights Video | Breaking Barriers, Building Power, Forging Alliances

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MUNICH YOUTH PRE-CONFERENCE



[High-level speakers from IAS, Global Fund and UNAIDS at the Youth Pre-Conference, AIDS 2024]

Prior to the main conference, the MYF held a Youth Pre-conference on Saturday, 20 July, creating momentum for the main event and offering a platform for young people to connect, discuss, and explore how young people are shaping and leading the responses to HIV. The half-day pre-conference included three key sessions: Breaking Barriers, Building Power, and Forging Alliances. It aimed to prepare young attendees for the main conference by providing opportunities for networking and knowledge exchange with peers and experts. Additionally, it allowed young participants to strengthen their

advocacy skills, focusing on the priorities of adolescents and youth living with or affected by HIV in diverse communities.

High-profile speakers, such as Dr. Vuyiseka Dubula, the Head of the Community, Rights & Gender Department at the Global Fund, Eamonn Murphy, UNAIDS Director for Regional Support in Asia Pacific and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and Birgit Poniatowski, Executive Director of IAS, attended to share their leadership experiences in the HIV response. They offered valuable insights on the main themes, spoke

about successful interventions in addressing critical issues impacting young people and emphasised their essential role in the HIV response, along with a commitment to collaborating with young people to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

Eamonn Murphy, UNAIDS Director for RST in Asia, the Pacific, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia, highlighted that many existing programs and systems failed to meet the 2020 targets, and achieving the 2025 goals, especially for young people, seems unlikely. He stressed the importance of involving young people meaningfully in the response, advocating for actions like enhancing their leadership roles, bolstering community structures, and offering tailored, youth-friendly HIV services. Eamonn, a long-time supporter and advocate for the youth movement, reiterated that young people mustn't just be viewed as beneficiaries; they are essential partners and leaders in these initiatives.

In her address, Dr. Vuyiseka urged young people to continue challenging established systems, leaders, donors, and governments. She strongly asserts that meaningful change necessitates action, even amid potential repercussions.

“Today, young people are the leaders – yet they require support in their journey to further their advocacy and leadership initiatives for sustaining HIV responses.”

Moreover, Kristopher Mills, Senior Youth and Gender Advisor at the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Global Health Security and Diplomacy from PEPFAR, in a panel discussion 'Forging Alliances' stated,

“PEPFAR is dedicated to amplifying youth voices and ensuring their central role in the HIV response. We must explore innovative and sustainable ways to engage youth, which will be crucial.”

This comment was made during a panel discussion with young advocates. They addressed the challenge of visa denials faced by many young people, primarily from Africa and parts of Asia, which resulted in some joining virtually and curtailing their in-person participation despite being awarded scholarships and support.



[Young respondents at the Youth Pre-Conference, AIDS 2024]

THE YOUTH PAVILLION



[A Faith Dialogue session in progress at the Youth Pavillion; An attendee leaving a key message on the advocacy wall]

The communications and advocacy working group thoughtfully crafted the Youth Pavilion space to create an inviting atmosphere for young people. It featured inclusive spaces that ensured a safe environment for everyone. Key elements included a main stage, games, a wellness room, podcast and video booths, an area dedicated to art and advocacy, an exhibition hall, yoga, and a special room for adolescents and young people living with HIV (AYPLHIV).

“What I enjoyed most about the Munich Youth Force was the diversity of people and the involvement of young people in the program. The decoration of the Youth Pavilion was artistic, and it felt safe to be there. The atmosphere and the dedication of the team, who were there to support each participant and provide attendees with the best experience possible. The Youth Pavilion was my favourite spot at the AIDS 2024 conference.” - A respondent from the MYF Feedback Survey.

More than 100 speakers participated in the Youth Force stage, where over 26 sessions were held across five days. The Youth Pavilion stage showcased diverse speakers covering engaging topics, including comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), chemsex, digital literacy, youth-led monitoring, hepatitis and HIV, adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) empowerment, climate change, faith-based dialogue, and more. For additional details about the sessions, visit the Munich Youth Force website.

Many sessions included crucial discussions centred on innovative strategies to tackle the diverse challenges young people encounter. They emphasised the need for sustainable funding, improved capacity-building initiatives, and solutions to issues within the HIV response. The agenda also featured “TED Talks” that addressed harm reduction, self-care, and mental health in the context of HIV programming.

Additionally, an art exhibit displayed impactful representations of young individuals leading the charge in the HIV response, showcasing the resilience and advocacy of youth in this vital area. Young people and youth-led organisations had the

opportunity to share their personal stories and showcase the remarkable initiatives they are leading across different countries and regions through video and podcast recordings. Podcasts recorded at the booth can be listened to via Spotify, and video content from the video booth will be released as part of LetsStopAIDS' LiveLifeLoving Project.

"I thoroughly enjoyed volunteering for the Munich Youth Force, where I met and interacted with other like-minded young people at the Youth Pavilion, the opening ceremony, the gaming area, and during the dialogue sessions on how to forge alliances to End AIDS." - A respondent from the MYF Feedback Survey.



[A collage of sessions at the Youth Pavilion Main Stage]

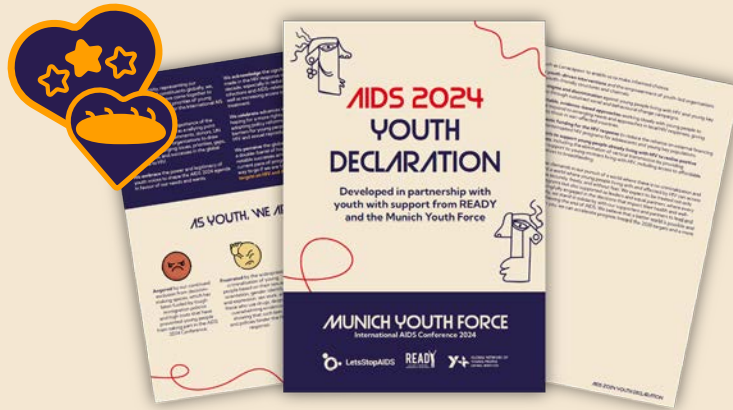
A significant highlight at the Youth Pavilion was the Youth Reception, which took place on 24 July and attracted over 100 attendees. These included celebrity speakers, donors, key stakeholders, and youth advocates. The

event offered a delightful chance for young people to connect, network, dance, and enjoy an evening filled with music, snacks, and drinks.



“Apart from volunteering, what also stood out was the incredible sense of community and collaboration among the young leaders. The Youth Pavilion became a hub for exchanging ideas, forming connections, and learning from others’ experiences in the HIV response. The energy was inspiring, with so many passionate voices coming together to break barriers, build power, and forge alliances. Being part of such a dynamic and purposeful movement was a privilege where everyone was united by a shared commitment to making a difference.” – A MYF Volunteer (feedback from the MYF Survey).

RESOURCES LAUNCHED AT AIDS 2024



AIDS 2024 Youth Declaration

The **AIDS 2024 Youth Declaration**, developed by the Munich Youth Force and the READY Movement, outlines critical recommendations such as ensuring youth representation in evidence generation, influencing policy by educating leaders, providing sustainable funding to youth networks and programs, and integrating evidence-based methods in policy-making. Consultations commenced online before the AIDS 2024 conference, enabling all young people, including those unable to attend, to contribute to the declaration.



YOUTH NEXT LEVEL: Guidance to Strengthen Sustainable Youth-led HIV Responses

Since 2022, UNAIDS and Y+ Global have partnered to better understand the role of young people in the HIV response and how to support youth-led responses to HIV. During the AIDS conference, they launched **YOUTH NEXT LEVEL: Guidance for strengthening sustainable youth-led HIV responses**. This resource, part of a comprehensive suite, offers tangible guidance and suggestions on effectively supporting the scaling up of youth-led HIV responses and advancing the goals of Result Area 7 in the Global AIDS Strategy, as well as the 30–80–60 community leadership targets outlined in the 2021 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS.



[Y+ Global and World Hepatitis Alliance launching the Living Positively with HIV & Hepatitis Toolkit]

Likewise, another resource launched at the conference was **Living Positively with HIV and Hepatitis: A Digital Toolkit for Young People**. This toolkit, created by Y+ Global in partnership with the World Hepatitis Alliance, aims to provide clear and accessible information about hepatitis and HIV. It seeks to raise awareness, dispel myths, and empower young people to make informed health choices. Additionally, it underscores the urgent need to improve access to treatment and care globally and urges stakeholders and donors to pay closer attention to the needs of young people living with HIV and hepatitis.

"NO VISA, NO VOICE": YOUTH MARCH

A significant moment at the Youth Pavilion was the **"No Visa, No Voice"** march, spearheaded by the READY Movement and groups of other young leaders. They sought to raise awareness about the unjust processes that left several young participants unable to attend the conference in person due to visa denials despite having all the required documentation. As a result, many key speakers missed the event, and many young attendees couldn't participate in both the pre-conference activities and the main presentations at the Youth Pavilion. Joined by other allies, young people rallied in solidarity with those facing visa rejections and against visa denialism, especially for young people living and travelling from Africa, Asia, and the Pacific.



[Faces of the 'No Visa, No Voice' march, led by young people for young people.]

AIDS 2024 VIRTUAL HUBS

Building on the success of the virtual hubs created for the AIDS conference in 2022 in Montreal (during COVID-19), this initiative, supported by the International AIDS Society, the International Community of Women Living with HIV (ICW), the Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+), and the Love Alliance via Aidsfonds, aims to keep young people connected and engaged in meaningful discussions during the conference, even if they cannot attend in person.

Alongside those who attended the conference in person from Y+ Global and LetsStop AIDS, as well as Youth Force members and volunteers, over 200 young individuals from Colombia, Honduras, Kenya, Laos, Malawi, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe participated through the virtual country hubs. These hubs, organised by youth-led country partners, provided an excellent opportunity for young people to connect, network, and enhance their conference participation without the hurdles and costs of travel.



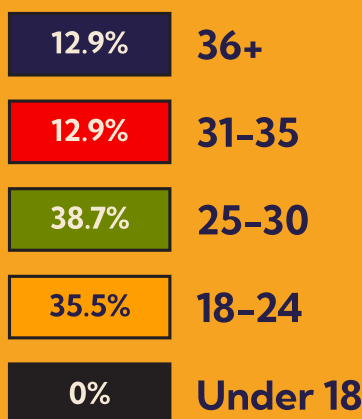
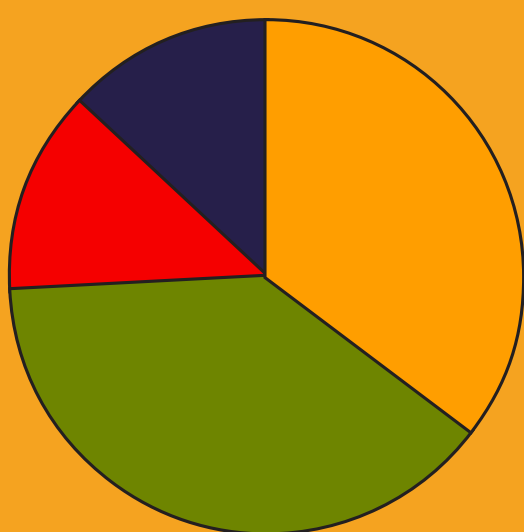
[Photos of virtual hubs organised by Y+ Malawi on the left and Copper Rose Zambia on the right.]

HOW DID THE MUNICH YOUTH FORCE DO?

Responses from the feedback survey

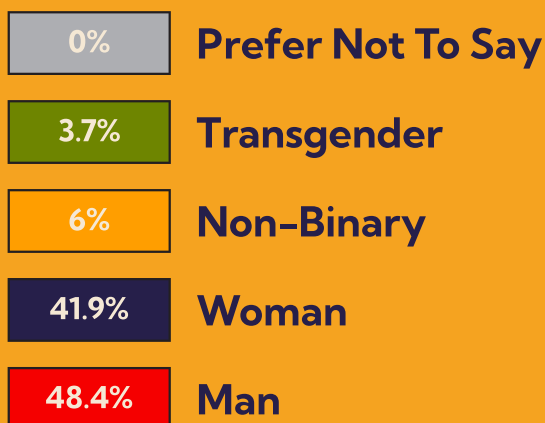
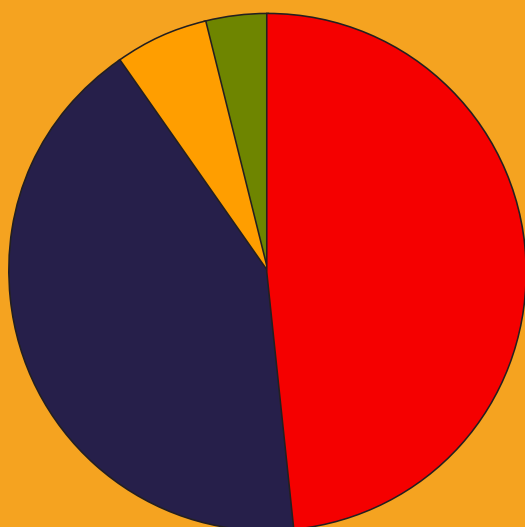
A feedback survey was conducted during and after the conference sessions to assess whether participants' experiences met expectations. Attendees were encouraged to provide feedback on sessions and give feedback to the Youth Force's organisers on areas for improvement. The collected data also revealed attendee demographics, including age and regional representation, and underscored important lessons applicable to future events.

Age distribution



The graph above indicates that most participants were aged 18 to 30, comprising 35.5% in the 18 to 24 age group and 38.7% in the 25 to 30 range. Additionally, 12.9% of adults over 36 years old expressed interest in MYF events, highlighting a given interest in collaboration between young people and on intergenerational issues.

Gender demographics



The graph above illustrates the gender demographics of attendees at MYF sessions and activities during the conference. The data indicate that cisgender men attended more frequently and were more inclined to participate in the survey, though the gender distribution between men and women appears relatively balanced.

From the survey, respondents offered comments for improving future conferences, which included: (Please note the following statements have been directly copied from the survey)

“Other people who missed the pre-conference. Next time, people should come the day before the sessions to avoid missing the sessions because of flight delays.”

“Improving physical, financial, and digital accessibility for participants from different regions, including travel support and more virtual participation options, ensures more equitable engagement. While some attended virtual hubs, not all countries had virtual hub support, and some young people didn’t get virtual registration.”

“AIDS Youth Force should make partnerships with embassies for each country where a member of the Youth Force lives and acknowledge embassies to be aware of their participation as a young person in the International AIDS Conference and to be prioritised regarding visa insurance.”

“While the interactions at the Youth Pavilion were valuable and mainly focused on young people, a

networking event to interact and learn from industry professionals, mentors, and experts can provide a platform for career and professional growth.”

“Al ser mi primera experiencia, siento que fue un espacio y evento muy único. Siento que la única indicación que podría dar es sobre la necesidad de incluir más lenguas tales como el español para de esa forma garantizar el pleno acceso de espacios de todas las personas considerando sus realidades y territorios.” [Being my first experience, I feel that it was a very unique space and event. I feel that the only indication I could give is about the need to include more languages such as Spanish in order to guarantee full access to spaces for all people considering their realities and territories.]

All respondents conveyed that the MYF met their expectations. On a scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 is low and 10 is high), every participant rated it between 7 and 10. Specifically, 41.9% gave a score of 10, 29% rated it 9, 19.4% scored it 8, and 9.7% chose 7. This indicates a high level of satisfaction with their MYF experience.

SUMMARY

In conclusion, many respondents reported that their experience at AIDS 2024 was positive, largely thanks to LetsStop AIDS and Y+ Global's leadership of the Youth Force, which significantly increased young people's meaningful engagement at the conference. The survey's main findings show that attendees found the conference to be educational, informative, creative, inclusive, and safe.

Fitting the theme 'Put People First', young people asserted their presence, ensuring their voices were prioritised. However, there is still work to be done to guarantee that young people receive the necessary space and visas to attend and that stakeholders and donors continue collaborating with them in future conferences. This will help amplify their voices in safe and constructive ways while maximising their time and experiences through interactions, connections, and meaningful dialogues at the conference.

We hope you enjoyed your time and experience at the Youth Pavillion and thank you for supporting the Munich Youth Force.



MUNICH YOUTH FORCE

International AIDS Conference 2024

