



READY+ AIDS 2026 Virtual Hubs



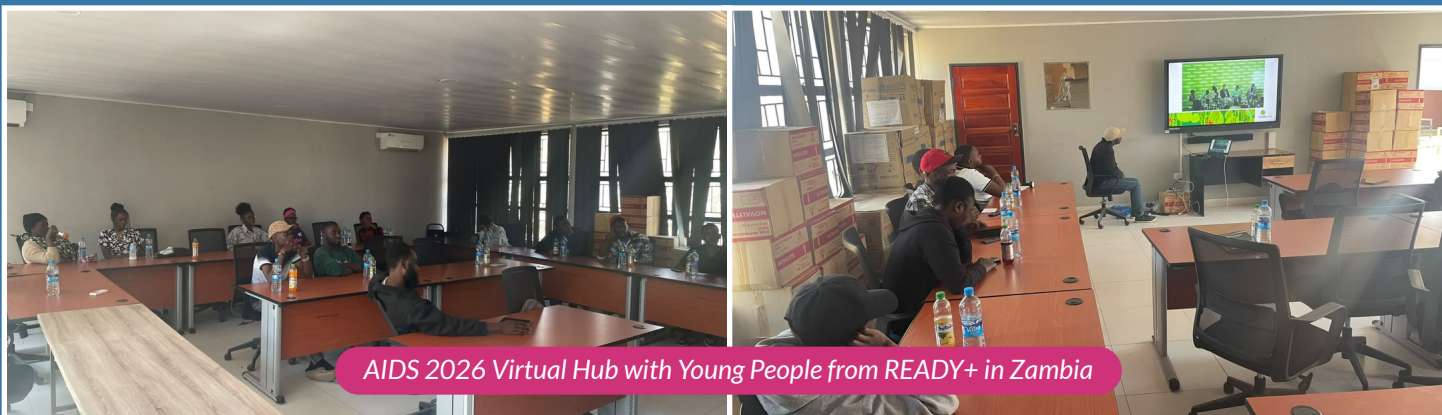
[AIDS 2026 Virtual Hub with Young People from READY+ in Malawi]

The International AIDS Conference 2026 provided an opportunity for young people, engaged through READY+, to connect global HIV discussions with the realities and priorities of adolescents and young people in their countries.

More than **50 young leaders**, READY+ peer supporters and youth advocates took part in three-day virtual hubs across **Eswatini, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia**. Organised by READY+ country networks, the hubs enabled participants to follow selected AIDS 2026 sessions, exchange experiences, reflect

on new evidence and innovations, and consider what these developments mean for young people in their communities

The four hubs connected young people who may not otherwise have been able to participate directly in the conference with global HIV discussions. Importantly, participants did more than watch conference sessions: they discussed what the issues meant in their national contexts and identified opportunities for advocacy, programming and engagement with decision-makers.



AIDS 2026 Virtual Hub with Young People from READY+ in Zambia

Innovation must come with access and choice

One of the clearest messages from the virtual hubs was that new HIV technologies will only have an impact if young people can access them, understand them and make informed choices about their use.

In **Eswatini** and **Zambia**, participants engaged with discussions on oral and long-acting PrEP, long-acting HIV treatment, broadly neutralising antibodies, vaccines and HIV cure research. While these developments generated excitement about the future of HIV prevention and treatment, participants also raised questions about affordability, accessibility and choice.

For young people, innovation needs to be matched with accessible information, affordable services, and meaningful opportunities to participate in decisions about how new interventions are introduced. This includes ensuring that young people understand the options available to them and can choose services that respond to their needs and circumstances.

In **Mozambique**, discussions focused on whether HIV services are meeting the realities of adolescents and young people. Participants highlighted the importance of services that are safe, accessible and respectful of privacy, and where young people can seek care without fear of stigma or discrimination.

Across the hubs, this reinforced a broader message: *progress in HIV science needs to be matched by progress in how services are designed and delivered.*

Peer and community leadership must be sustained

Community leadership was another consistent theme across the hubs. Participants challenged approaches that position communities simply as recipients of programmes, highlighting instead the role of young people, peer supporters and community organisations in designing services, reaching their peers, identifying gaps and holding health systems accountable.

The READY+ experience in Eswatini demonstrates the value of this approach. Peer supporters play an important role in treatment literacy, linkage to services, adherence, retention and helping young people navigate health systems in ways that respond to their realities.

The hubs also highlighted the importance of sustainable investment in these approaches. Participants reflected on the increasingly uncertain funding environment and its implications for prevention, treatment, community-led services, advocacy and human rights work. When funding becomes less predictable, programmes closest to communities can be particularly vulnerable.

For READY+, this reinforces the need to sustain and strengthen *youth-led and community-led approaches* alongside the introduction of new HIV prevention and treatment options.



AIDS 2026 Virtual Hub with Young People from READY+ in Eswatini



Turning community experience into evidence

Community-led monitoring emerged as another important area of learning. Conference discussions reinforced the value of communities generating evidence from their experiences of health services and using that evidence to advocate for improvements.

For participants in **Malawi**, these discussions connected directly with the **READY to Care Scorecard**, which places young people's experiences at the centre

of assessing HIV services. The Malawi experience also highlighted the importance of linking youth-led accountability approaches with government systems, including strengthening peer-led Teen Clubs and integrating community feedback into health-facility improvement processes.

The learning from AIDS 2026 therefore goes beyond collecting young people's views. ***The opportunity is to turn those experiences into evidence that can inform programmes, improve services and influence policy.***



AIDS 2026 Virtual Hub with Young People from READY+ in Malawi





What next?

The value of the AIDS 2026 virtual hubs will ultimately be measured by what happens after the conference. Across the four READY+ countries, the discussions identified several areas for continued action:

- **Strengthening treatment and prevention literacy**, particularly around emerging HIV technologies and new prevention and treatment options.
- **Sustaining peer-led support**, recognising the role of peer supporters in helping young people access, navigate and remain engaged with HIV services.
- **Expanding community-led monitoring**, so that young people's experiences generate evidence that can improve services and inform decision-making.
- **Strengthening meaningful youth engagement**, ensuring young people are involved in decisions about how HIV interventions and services are designed and introduced.
- **Connecting global evidence with national priorities**, using learning from international spaces to inform advocacy, programming and policy engagement at country level.

The virtual hubs demonstrated the value of creating spaces where young people can connect global HIV developments to their own experiences and priorities. Young people should not only be prepared to benefit from advances in the HIV response. They should have the opportunity to shape them.

As READY+ continues its work across countries in Eastern and Southern Africa, including Angola, Eswatini, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe, the learning from AIDS 2026 provides a foundation for translating global evidence into locally relevant advocacy, programming and policy engagement.

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