

# Unmasking Stigma, Mobilizing Resilience

Zero HIV Stigma Day 2025 Report

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STIGMA  
ZERO HIV  
DAY

## Progress Undermined by Persistent Stigma



Scientific progress (ART, PrEP, U=U) has transformed HIV care, but stigma remains a critical barrier



Intersectional stigma most severely affects marginalized groups (e.g., LGBTQ+, sex workers, migrants)



Stigma delays diagnosis, disrupts treatment, damages mental health, and diminishes quality of life



Self-, institutional, and societal stigma are overlapping, reinforcing forces



## 2025 Campaign



# HIV STIGMA WARRIORS

- 2025 theme honors courage and creativity in HIV stigma resistance
- Warriors include peer navigators, lawyers, artists, educators, youth influencers, every single one of us
- Words alone cannot end HIV stigma, action can end stigma in all its forms



### In Honor of...

- Prudence Nobantu Mabele, in whose honor Zero HIV Stigma Day was launched in 2023
- Activists, clinicians, policymakers, artists, teachers, ordinary people who speak truth, extend compassion, and act with intention



Internalized  
negative personal  
beliefs, feelings,  
and attitudes  
that people  
living with HIV  
may feel about  
themselves.

HIV STIGMA  
WARRIORS

SELF

STIGMA  
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## Self-Stigma

- A pervasive psychological burden experienced by over 80% of PLHIV global PLHIV Stigma Index survey respondents
- Begins at diagnosis and is often reinforced by societal narratives that associate HIV with "moral failing"
- Selfstigma leads to shame, guilt, social withdrawal, and ultimately hindering ART adherence and mental health
- Selfstigma is linked to delayed care engagement, lower quality of life, and increased depression and anxiety
- Intersectionality intensifies the impact: women, LGBTQ+ and marginalized groups face compounded layers of stigma
- The cost is systemic, resulting in poorer health outcomes, higher healthcare costs, and slower public health response





HIV stigma in **HEALTHCARE,  
WORK, LEGAL SYSTEMS,  
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES,**

and other community  
settings. Embedded within  
policies, procedures, and  
practices of various  
institutions and  
organization.



**INSTITUTIONAL**





## Institutional Stigma

- Institutional stigma refers to discriminatory laws, policies, and practices embedded in health care, legal systems, education, workplaces that disadvantage PLHIV
- 60+ countries still criminalize HIV exposure, nondisclosure, or transmission, despite global scientific consensus on U=U
- Healthcare systems often perpetuate stigma through breaches of confidentiality, denial of services, discriminatory protocols
- Workplaces and schools still expel or exclude PLHIV, often illegally, which deters people from seeking testing or care
- Funding cuts and siloed programs treat HIV as shameful and disconnected from primary care







# INTERPERSONAL

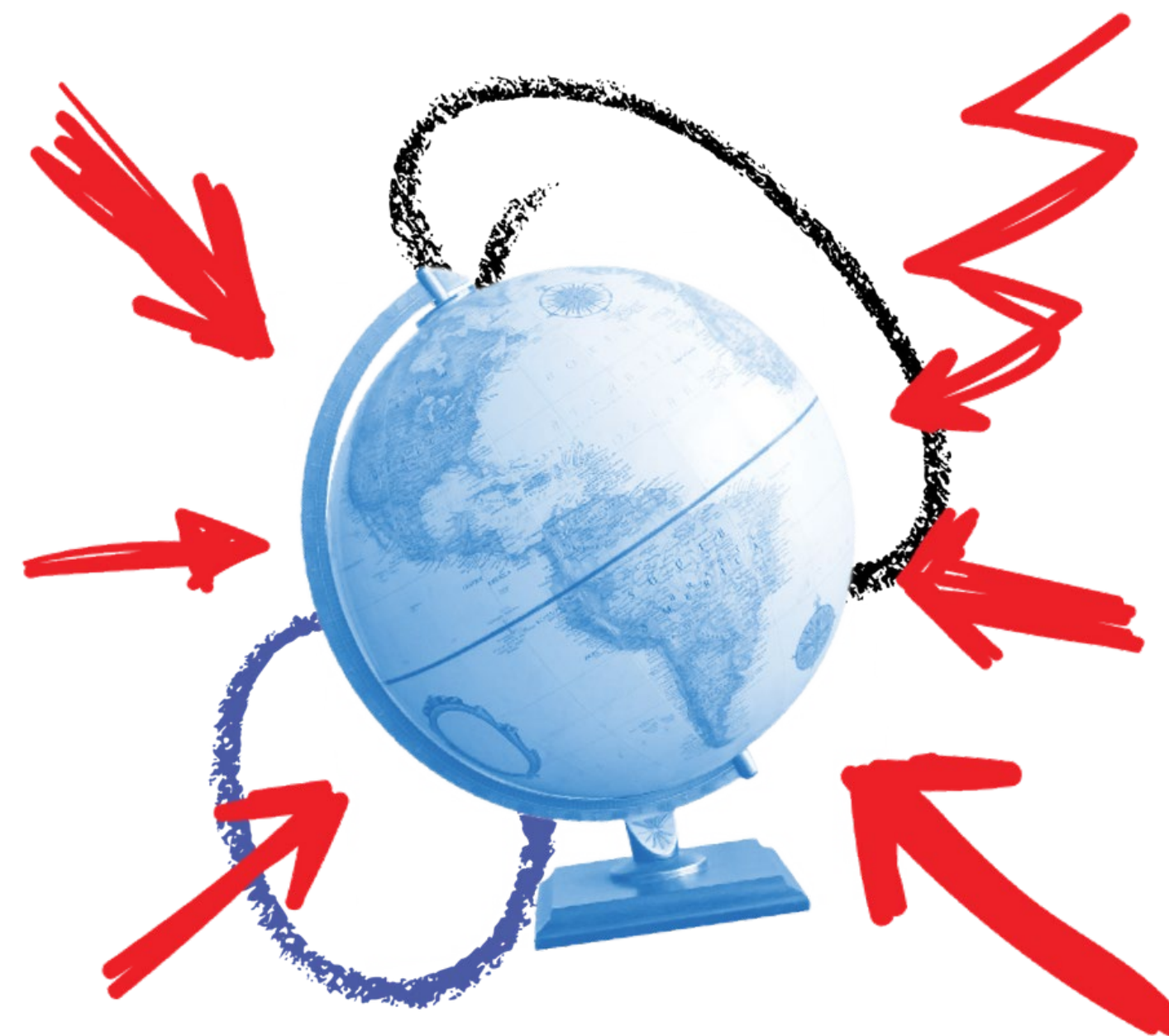
**STIGMA**  
ZERO HIV  
DAY

STIGMA & DISCRIMINATION  
FACED BY PEOPLE LIVING  
WITH HIV FROM  
THEIR FAMILY, FRIENDS,  
PEERS, COLLEAGUES, AND THE  
BROADER COMMUNITY.



## Societal Stigma

- Societal stigma is a culturally entrenched form of HIV stigma rooted in norms, beliefs, and language:
  - 2024 global data shows 1 in 3 people are uncomfortable eating with someone living with HIV (!!!)
  - Media, religion, culture reinforce HIV as a moral issue
  - Terms like 'clean' perpetuate othering
- People with multiple marginalized identities experience compounded intersectional stigma(s)
- Stigma leads to reduced HIV testing, ART adherence, poor health outcomes
- U=U disrupts stigma, yet remains underused





# Recommendations



## GLOBAL

1. Make stigma-reduction a core global health metric
2. Intensify global advocacy for decriminalization
3. Mainstream U=U across global guidance/campaigns
4. Expand Global PLHIV HIV Stigma Index
5. Elevate stigma within the SDG acceleration agenda



## REGIONAL

1. Develop and share model anti-stigma laws regionally
2. Build and support stigma-resilience networks
3. Monitor stigma through regional surveillance systems
4. Partner with regional media to promote U=U
5. Use regional courts to redress discrimination



# Recommendations



## NATIONAL

1. Repeal laws criminalizing HIV and related behaviors
2. Institutionalize stigma-free training for HCPs
3. Enact/enforce comprehensive antidiscrimination laws
4. Fund community-led stigma reduction programs
5. Promote U=U in national policies and campaigns



## MUNICIPAL LEVEL

1. Create stigma-free, U=U-informed community spaces
2. Engage religious leaders in stigma-free dialogue
3. Integrate and pay peer navigators and CHWs
4. Celebrate local HIV Stigma Warriors
5. Track/ act on stigma data in city budgets and systems



## Recommendations



### INDIVIDUAL

1. Educate yourself; U=U is real and lifesaving
2. Speak out when you witness any form of stigma
  3. Share or amplify your stories with others
  4. Vote and advocate for stigmafree policies
  5. Support and join communityled initiatives

## Transformative Truth



UNDETECTABLE EQUALS UNTRANSMITTABLE

U=U is a transformative truth:

- Affirms that PLHIV with an undetectable VL cannot sexually transmit HIV
- Effectively communicates a message of dignity and hope as a fear disruptor
- Yet, U=U is underused– silenced by stigma
- We must unmute U=U to unmask stigma



# Warrior's Movement



## PLHIV

Know that you are not alone, you are not broken, and you are not to blame. You are powerful. Your truth matters. Your joy matters.

## POLICYMAKER

Legislate with courage. Protect human rights. Fund stigma elimination like it matters— because it does.



## HEALTH WORKER

Listen with respect. Serve without judgment. Treat with compassion. Tell the truth about U=U consistently. Let science restore dignity.

## EVERYONE ELSE

Join us. In your home, your workplace, your vote, your advocacy. We all have a role to play as **HIV Stigma Warriors**.

This is the movement.



[ZeroHIVStigma.org](https://ZeroHIVStigma.org)

In 2025, we do not need more performative gestures. We need a groundswell of action rooted in love, accountability, and solidarity. We need

**HIV Stigma Warriors** – everywhere. This is the charge of **Zero HIV Stigma Day 2025**. This is the movement. This is the moment.

