

# SHARING YOUR HIV STATUS SAFELY

SOME COUNTRIES HAVE LAWS THAT VIOLATE THE RIGHT OF YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV TO DECIDE WHEN AND WHETHER TO DISCLOSE THEIR HIV STATUS.

Some countries have laws that say people living with HIV must tell their sexual partner(s) about their status before having sex, even if they use condoms or only engage in sexual activity with a very low risk of transmitting HIV to someone else. These laws violate the rights of people living with HIV by forcing people to disclose or face the possibility of criminal charges.

Some countries also impose travel restrictions and mandatory HIV testing, which prevent people living with HIV from entering, transiting through, studying, working or living in a country. These legal barriers can also prevent you from disclosing your status and accessing health care services.

Strategies to protect yourself:

- Find out the specific laws in your country, visit <http://www.hivjustice.net/site/countries> or speak to your service providers or local support group.
- Open communication and trust are important for healthy relationships. At the same time, it is also wise to take steps to protect yourself from criminalization. The best way to protect yourself is to share your status with your partner(s) before becoming intimate (including kissing, oral sex or full penetrative vaginal and anal sex).

- New laws criminalising the transmission and exposure of HIV to others are based on whether the person living with HIV has disclosed their HIV-positive status to their partner(s) or kept it hidden. It is good that you decide to disclose your HIV status to your partner. If you think you may need to keep evidence, you can use any form. Just follow your intuition.
- Demonstrate that you have taken steps to reduce the chances of your partner(s) becoming infected. This includes choosing lower risk sexual activities, using condoms consistently and adhering to your treatment, if you are on antiretroviral therapy (ART).
- Get involved in advocacy to change laws that violate your rights or uphold laws that protect your rights to health and privacy. Contact your local network of people living with HIV.