



World AIDS Day Message

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Michel Sidibé

Executive Director of UNAIDS
Under-Secretary-General of the
United Nations

This year marks the 30th Anniversary of the first World AIDS Day. Thirty years of activism and solidarity under the banner of World AIDS Day. Thirty years of campaigning for universal access to life-saving services to treat and prevent HIV. But after 30 years, AIDS is still not over. We have miles to go.

World AIDS Day is a day to remember the millions of people who have lost their lives to AIDS-related illnesses, many of whom died because they couldn't access HIV services, because of stigma, because of discrimination and because of criminalization of key populations.

On this World AIDS Day, UNAIDS is campaigning for people to know their HIV status and their viral load. In 2017, 9.4 million people were simply unaware that they are living with a potentially deadly, but treatable, disease. If people don't know their HIV status, people who are living with HIV can't start treatment, and people who are HIV-negative can't get the knowledge and skills they need to keep that way.

If people don't know their HIV status, they can't protect themselves, their families, their partners. If people living with HIV don't know their viral



load, they won't be sure that the treatment is effective, protecting their health and stopping HIV transmission.

Live life positively. Know your HIV status.

Contact

UNAIDS | Sophie Barton-Knott | tel. +41 22 791 1697 | bartonknotts@unaids.org

UNAIDS

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths.

UNAIDS unites the efforts of 11 UN organizations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank—and works closely with global and national partners towards ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. Learn more at unaids.org and connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.



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As we join the rest of the world to commemorate World AIDS Day today, am prompted to ask - Do you know your HIV status?



Dr. Karusa Kiragu, UNAIDS Country Director

The first World AIDS Day was commemorated in 1988, and this is the 30th World AIDS Day. On this day, we take stock of achievements, remember those who have passed away and also reflect on those who are living with HIV and rededicate ourselves to the fight against the epidemic.

The global theme for this year's World AIDS day is 'Live life positively: know your HIV status' and the national theme takes this a step further emphasizing that 'This is the time to know your HIV status'. The Ministry of Health recommends that adults in Uganda should take an HIV test once a year. HIV testing is essential for expanding treatment and ensuring that all people living with HIV can lead healthy and productive lives. It is also crucial to achieving the 90-90-90 targets and empowering people to make choices about HIV prevention so they can protect themselves. Knowing your HIV status is where it all begins.

A negative result is an opportunity to take deliberate steps to prevent acquisition. And while a positive result is never welcome, knowing one's status enables them to access to treatment.

If one takes the medicine well, he or she can become virally suppressed, become healthier, and protect their loved ones. UNAIDS does not support mandatory or compulsory testing of individuals on public health grounds. The only mandatory or compulsory testing that UNAIDS supports is:

1. Screening of donors prior to all procedures involving transfer of bodily fluids or body parts, such as artificial insemination, corneal grafts and organ transplant.
2. Screening for HIV and other blood-borne infections of all blood destined for transfusion or for manufacture of blood products.

HIV testing, no matter how it is delivered, must always respect personal choice and adhere to ethical and human rights principles. This means that all HIV testing services must adhere to the "5 Cs" of the World Health Organization:

1. **Consent:** People receiving HIV testing services must give informed consent to access testing and counselling.
2. **Confidentiality:** HIV testing services must be confidential, meaning that what the HIV testing provider and the client discuss should not be disclosed to anyone else without the expressed consent of the person being tested.
3. **Counselling:** pretest information should be provided, and people should have the opportunity to ask questions in a private setting
4. **Correct results:** Providers of HIV testing should provide high-quality testing services and quality assurance mechanisms should ensure that people receive a correct diagnosis; and
5. **Connection:** linkage to HIV prevention, treatment and care services should include effective and appropriate follow-up, including long-term prevention and treatment support.

Of the 1.3m Ugandans living with HIV, a quarter are not aware of their status, because they have not sought an HIV test. HIV testing allows individuals to claim their right to health, and it can also provide an

opportunity to screen and test for other illnesses, such as tuberculosis, hepatitis, high blood pressure and diabetes. Saving money and saving lives.

Uganda has made significant progress in reducing the number of new HIV infections. Recent statistics show that the number of new infections in 2017 were 50,000 down from 100,000 in 2010. In addition, the country reduced the number of AIDS deaths from 47,000 in 2010 to 26,000 in 2017.

On 21st November 2018, the country launched its HIV Prevention Road Map—a major step towards ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030, and an additional commitment to an urgent global agenda. UNAIDS commends the government of Uganda for this important step. The Prevention Road Map is a direct result of the Presidential Fast Track Initiative to End AIDS in Uganda by 2030, and the role of Uganda in the Global HIV Prevention Coalition.

There are still over 950 new HIV infections and 450 deaths every week in the country, indicating that much more needs to be done to reduce them.

Marginalized groups remain at high risk of HIV infection, largely due to stigma and discrimination; inadequate financing for primary prevention programs; inadequate information for proper target-setting; unsupportive legal and policy environments for uptake of prevention services, and sexual and gender-based violence. UNAIDS continues to emphasize that we can only end the epidemic in the country if no population subgroups are left behind, and if services are available to all Ugandans.

Each of us is a champion in this journey to end AIDS. We all share the same certainty. The journey requires commitment and action from all stakeholders — the leaders, the communities, the implementers, the health care workers, the families, the men, the women....all of us.

Ending AIDS demands focussed vision and action from all of us, and there can be no spectators. Above all, knowledge is power. This is the time to know your HIV status. If you test positive, get on treatment. If you test negative, test every year.