

World AIDS Day - Stop AIDS Keep the Promise - "Leadership"

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ABSTRACT

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World AIDS Day, observed 1st December each year, is dedicated to increasing awareness, fighting prejudice, imparting education and raising money to fight the AIDS pandemic caused by the spread of HIV infection.. AIDS has killed more than 25 million people, with an estimated 33.2 million people living with HIV according to 2007 UNAIDS global estimate, making it one of the most destructive epidemics in recorded history.

2008 marks the 20th anniversary of World AIDS Day. Since 1988, the challenges and answers to AIDS have greatly changed. While many of these changes are encouraging, all stakeholders fighting against AIDS have to think how much more still need to be done.

Keywords: AIDS, HIV, World AIDS Day, Universal access, Leadership

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"Leadership" has been chosen by the World AIDS Campaign as the theme for World AIDS Day 2007 and 2008. This theme will continue to be promoted with the slogan "Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise." the World AIDS Campaign (WAC) emphasis from 2005-2010. It is evident that the world needs inspiring and empowering leadership at all levels to transform the response to HIV/AIDS. Leadership empowers individuals, organisations and governments to lead the fight against AIDS.

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it one of the most destructive epidemics in recorded history.

2007 HIV/AIDS National scenario estimates suggest adult HIV prevalence in India as 0.34%, amounting to 2.31 million people. Out of the estimated number of PLWHA, 39% are females and 3.5% are children. Prevalence is also high in the 15-49 age groups (88.7%) indicating that AIDS threatens the cream of society, the workforce of the Country.

Kerala is not a high prevalence state. However its high prevalence neighboring states Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka makes Kerala it highly vulnerable. The current prevalence among the general population is 0.2% and the estimated number of positives in the State is about 25,000. But the matter of real concern is that only around 6000 have been identified as positive through HIV testing, leaving the major part of the iceberg hidden.

While treatment for HIV and AIDS has improved and become more widespread since 1988, many still do not have access to it. In 2007 only 31% of those in low to middle income countries who need treatment received

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it. Despite HIV awareness now reaching nearly all areas of the globe, infection rates are still happening 2.7 times faster than the increase in number of people receiving treatment.

NACO aims to halt and reverse the epidemic in India over the next five years through National AIDS Control Programme-III (NACP-111) by measures such as saturation of coverage of high risk groups with targeted interventions, scaled up interventions for the general population, and through integration and augmentation of systems and human resources in prevention, care and support and treatment at the district, state and national levels.

The goal of "universal access" to comprehensive prevention programmes, treatment, care and support by 2010 is only two years away. To achieve this goal, leadership and action is needed now.

Governments must deliver on the promises they have made. Communities must encourage leadership of its members. Individuals must feel empowered to access treatment, to know their rights and take action against

stigma and discrimination, and to know and use methods of prevention against receiving and transmitting HIV.

END NOTE

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