Media Update
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UNICEF
PRESS RELEASE

WORLD AIDS DAY
1 December 2019

Over 300 children and adolescents die every day from AIDS-related causes

Only half of children living with HIV have access to life-saving treatment – UNICEF


Low access to antiretroviral treatment, in addition to limited prevention efforts, is a leading cause for these deaths, with only 54 per cent of children aged 0-14 living with HIV in 2018 – or 790,000 children – receiving lifesaving antiretroviral therapy.

“The world is on the cusp of making great gains in the battle against HIV and AIDS, but we must not rest on the laurels of progress made,” said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore. “Neglecting testing and treatment initiatives for children and adolescents is a matter of life and death, and for them, we must choose life.”

In Pakistan, a joint United Nations team led the investigation into the HIV outbreak earlier this year in Larkana district of Sindh. Unsafe injection practices were identified as the main cause of the outbreak. Since then, around 37,000 people have been tested and 1,158 were found infected. Unfortunately, 80 per cent of the infected are children under 13 year of age.
“Supporting the Sindh government’s response to the HIV outbreak, UNICEF has established two Paediatric HIV Centres in Larkana district for providing care and support to the infected children,” says Aida Girma, UNICEF Representative in Pakistan. “Besides capacity building of the medical staff, UNICEF is also renovating the existing infrastructure and providing supplies and equipment.”

“We are also working at community level to raise awareness regarding modes of transmission of HIV and advising people to seek scanning and treatment services at the HIV Centres.”

Data from the UNICEF report reflects deep regional disparities in access to treatment among children living with HIV. Compared to other regions of the world, access is highest in South Asia, at 91 per cent.

According to the report, mothers’ access to antiretroviral therapy to prevent the transmission of the virus to their babies has increased globally, reaching 82 per cent, up from 44 per cent less than 10 years ago. However, disparities between regions persist.

“While we still have a long way to go, giving more and more pregnant women antiretroviral treatment to prevent mother-to-child transmission has helped avert about 2 million new HIV infections and prevented the deaths of over 1 million children under five years old,” Fore said. “We need to see similar progress in paediatric treatment. Closing this gap between children and their mothers could significantly increase the life expectancy and quality of life of children infected with HIV.”

Additional data from the report include:

- In 2018, around 160,000 children aged 0-9 were newly infected with HIV, bringing the total number of children in this age group living with HIV to 1.1 million.

- 89,000 children under the age of five were infected during pregnancy or birth and 76,000 were infected during breastfeeding in 2018.

- 140,000 adolescent girls were newly infected with HIV in 2018, compared to 50,000 adolescent boys.
To end HIV/AIDS as a public health threat for future generations, UNICEF is urging governments and partners to:

- Improve HIV testing and treatment data for children and adolescents to better respond to the needs of this vulnerable population.

- Invest in and implement effective and innovative interventions to urgently close the persistent testing and treatment gap for children and adolescents living with HIV.

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About UNICEF

UNICEF works in some of the world’s toughest places, to reach the world’s most disadvantaged children. Across more than 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone. For more information about UNICEF and its work for children, visit www.unicef.org. Follow UNICEF on Twitter and Facebook.

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**United Nations**

SECRETARY-GENERAL’S MESSAGE

**WORLD AIDS DAY**

1 December 2019

Ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030, as we committed to in the Sustainable Development Goals, will require a continuous collaborative effort. The United Nations, Governments, civil society and other partners have been working together to scale up access to health services and to halt new HIV infections. More than 23 million people living with HIV were receiving treatment in 2018.
Communities around the world are at the heart of this response—helping people to claim their rights, promoting access to stigma-free health and social services, ensuring that services reach the most vulnerable and marginalized, and pressing to change laws that discriminate. As the theme of this year’s observance rightly highlights, communities make the difference.

Yet unmet needs remain. A record 38 million people are living with HIV, and resources for the response to the epidemic declined by $1 billion last year. More than ever we need to harness the role of community-led organizations that advocate for their peers, deliver HIV services, defend human rights and provide support.

Where communities are engaged, we see change happen. We see investment lead to results. And we see equality, respect and dignity.

With communities, we can end AIDS.

For More information and communication resources:

- campaign brochure
- definition of community-led organizations according to the communities themselves.
- social media
- Communities make the difference
- What is a community-led organizations

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