



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

Statement on World AIDS Day

UNDP Administrator Helen Clark

Dec 1, 2015

AIDS continues to be a major global health and development challenge. Since its emergence as one of the most brutal and debilitating diseases in history, it has already claimed the lives of more than 34 million people.

Today, 36.9 million people are living with HIV, with 1.2 million deaths from AIDS-related illnesses and two million new HIV infections occurring in 2014 alone. The devastation wrought by AIDS-related illnesses is very real, especially in sub-Saharan Africa where the majority of new HIV infections occur.

The recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) commit us to accelerate progress towards ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030. Delivering on this ambition will require dramatically expanding and improving access to HIV treatment, reducing the number of new HIV infections, and eliminating HIV-related discrimination.

At the same time, the SDGs also provide an opportunity to address HIV, health, and development in a more inclusive and integrated manner which leaves no one behind. Ending AIDS as a public health threat will require reducing inequalities and exclusion, empowering women and girls, and creating more inclusive and peaceful societies.

There is reason to feel encouraged on this World AIDS Day. The world has made enormous progress - new HIV infections have fallen by 35% since 2000 and AIDS-related deaths have dropped by 42% since their peak in 2004. Today, 15.8 million people are accessing life-saving antiretroviral therapy, 2.2 million of whom are supported through the UNDP-Global Fund partnership.

Yet, there are significant challenges ahead. The sense of urgency and commitment to human rights which drove the early days of the response must be harnessed. AIDS is a disease of inequality and socially marginalized communities like men who have sex with men, sex workers, people who inject drugs and transgender people, and these groups are disproportionately affected. It is critical to tackle discrimination and remove punitive laws to enable universal access to health and social services.

On this World AIDS Day, the world stands at a critical juncture. With the end of AIDS within our reach, we have a window of opportunity before us. We must accelerate the pace on the last mile of the AIDS response.

If we maintain the status quo, HIV will continue to outpace the response, and the goal of ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030 will not be reached. Alternatively, if defeating HIV remains a top priority, and if HIV responses and policies are approached in a holistic, non-discriminatory manner, where marginalized groups are placed at the forefront of our efforts, we can reach our goal.

That really would be cause for celebration.

UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations which can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth which improves the quality of life for everyone. On the ground in more than 170 countries and territories, we offer global perspectives and local insights to help empower lives and build resilient nations.