



World AIDS Day was marked today at the Ministry of Public Health in Kabul. KABUL 1 December 2015 - The Ministry of Public Health, together with WHO and key partners, marked World AIDS Day at an event held in Kabul today in the presence of Government representatives, civil society organizations and UN partners committed to halting the HIV epidemic in Afghanistan. While HIV prevalence is low, accelerated efforts are necessary to ensure more effective prevention strategies and treatment for those most vulnerable to contracting HIV.

“World AIDS Day presents an opportunity to renew our commitment to stopping HIV/AIDS,” said Dr Ferozuddin Feroz, Minister of Public Health. “Afghanistan’s ability to better diagnose HIV has improved tremendously in the last years due to our strengthened surveillance system, people’s increased awareness about the disease and major improvements in the quality of HIV services and blood testing. We must ensure that quality HIV treatment reaches all those in need.”

The National AIDS Control Programme and the Ministry of Public Health have to date recorded 1,874 people living with HIV in Afghanistan, nearly 80 percent of whom are men. Globally, the world has halted and reversed the spread of HIV. New infections have fallen by 35 percent since 2000 and AIDS-related deaths have decreased by 24 percent. HIV has become a manageable chronic disease.

Accelerated efforts are necessary to ensure HIV prevention and treatment services reach everyone in need. Currently HIV testing and counseling services are available in 10 provinces and nearly 650 people living with HIV are receiving anti-retroviral therapy in two provinces. Five health centres provide services for pregnant women to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

“Strengthening HIV testing methods, expanding the availability of treatment options and increasing the number of health centres providing anti-retroviral therapy are crucial measures that need to be taken to stop the HIV epidemic. We must also do more to fight the stigma associated with the disease,” said Dr Richard Peeperkorn, WHO Country Representative. “One of the targets of the newly-launched global Sustainable Development Goals is to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030. To reach this goal, we need to translate commitments into action.”

In Afghanistan the main route of HIV transmission remains needle sharing among injecting drug users. Tackling drug addiction is key to controlling the spread of HIV. The Ministry of Public Health is committed to expanding oral substitution therapy, a medical treatment that involves replacing opioids with prescribed medicine, to more Afghan cities to ease addicts off heroin and opium and decrease their risk of contracting HIV.

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