

The regional campaign on the occasion of World AIDS Day 2014 (1 December) calls for ensuring lifelong treatment success, measured by the suppression of the virus in the body.

With the success of treatment and suppression of the virus, people living with HIV can now lead long, healthy and productive lives.

Additionally, with the suppression of the virus the risk of transmission from those who are infected with HIV to others becomes very low. This is known as “treatment as prevention”.

Recent medical advancements in treating people living with HIV with antiretroviral therapy (ART) in the right combination of medicines mean the the virus can be controlled and reduced to undetectable levels in the body. Achieving an undetectable viral load keeps the immune system robust enough to fight opportunistic infections and cancers.

Furthermore, HIV treatment can be used as an additional measure to prevent the transmission of HIV from people living with HIV to uninfected partners. Similarly, by achieving undetectable viral load levels through treatment, pregnant women living with HIV can now have HIV-free babies.

Secondary to this preventive benefit to individuals, implementing ART programmes and achieving undetectable viral loads on a large scale has the benefit of reducing the likelihood of HIV transmission in general. This constitutes a major public health gain that can eventually result in curbing the HIV epidemic.

World AIDS Day is occurring for the third year within the framework of the regional initiative to End the HIV Treatment Crisis. This is a call for action to governments, civil society groups, people living with HIV and international partners to renew their commitment and re-double their efforts to make ART accessible to all those who need it.

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