



WORLD AIDS DAY 2021

NEWSLETTER



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In
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Malawi Government committed to end AIDS by 2030

The Malawi Government has expressed commitment to attain the dream of ending AIDS as a public health threat by the year 2030. Speaking at this year's World AIDS Day at Bumba Primary School ground in Rumphi, Guest of Honour who is also Deputy Minister of Health Chrissy Kalamula Kanyasko said the country is also on course to realise the three zeros along with the target.

She said: "The Government will continue to place HIV and AIDS on its development agenda to ensure that we end inequalities as a prerequisite to ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030."

She said Government realized the need for increased investments in the National Response to the HIV and AIDS epidemic if the dream of ending the epidemic as a public health threat is to be achieved. She, therefore, called upon development partners to continue giving a supporting hand as the Government continued to work towards improving domestic financing for the National Response.

World AIDS Day is commemorated globally on 1st December every year, marking the year-long activities designed to raise awareness on HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support as well as remember those that have died from AIDS-related illnesses. This year's event was held under the theme "End inequalities! End AIDS! End Pandemics!"

Malawi has aligned its dream of achieving the 95:95:95 treatment targets to the National Strategic Plan for HIV and AIDS (2020-2025), and after one year of the NSP, the country's performance on the targets stands at 97:92:94.

"The Government will continue to place HIV and AIDS on its development agenda to ensure that we end inequalities as a prerequisite to ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030."



U.S Diplomat Commends Malawi for Making HIV Treatment Accessible

The USA Chargé d'Affaires in Malawi Jeremy Neitzthke has commended the Malawi Government for making HIV treatment easily accessible to every infected person. He said treatment remains the most effective prevention intervention available globally because it reduces the risk of HIV transmission from a person living with HIV to an HIV-negative partner by 96%.

The diplomat made the remarks on 1st December 2021 at Bumba Primary School ground in Rumphi District during the annual commemoration of the World AIDS Day and celebrations on Malawi's achievements towards the national response to the epidemic.

“ WHILE MALAWI HAS MADE TREMENDOUS STRIDES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HIV/AIDS, AS A COUNTRY WE MUST ALSO BE VIGILANT AND ACKNOWLEDGE THE ONGOING FIGHT AGAINST THE GLOBAL COVID-19 PANDEMIC.”

U.S. Government in close partnership and collaboration with the Government of Malawi, is supporting over 870,000 people living with HIV on lifesaving antiretroviral treatment,” said Neitzke. The diplomat said globally, through the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief known as PEPFAR, the U.S Government has saved more than 20 million lives, prevented millions of HIV infections and supported many countries to reach epidemic control of HIV.

In his remarks, he alluded that the US government has provided over \$1 billion to ensure that all Malawians have comprehensive access to quality HIV prevention, care, and treatment services. He indicated that the support is in addition to \$600 million provided by the U.S Government to the Global Fund for Malawi. He recalled that in 2020 alone, the combined contributions from PEPFAR and the Global Fund totaled \$298 million towards the national HIV response.

Inequality Worsening AIDS Devastation

In agreement with the 2021 World AIDS Day theme “End Inequalities. End AIDS. End Pandemics” the UN Resident Coordinator in Malawi Zhijun Chen says inequalities are the driving forces worsening the devastation caused by AIDS and he calls for a bold action to deal out with it.

“In this historic effort to end AIDS, it is imperative to recognize that without bold action against inequalities, the world, including Malawi, risks missing the targets to end AIDS as well as witness a pro-longed COVID-19 pandemic with spiraling social and economic consequences,” said the envoy.

He noted that the world is now off-track on delivering on the shared commitment to end AIDS, not because of a lack of knowledge or tools to beat AIDS, but because of structural inequalities that are obstructing proven solutions to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.



Chen recalled that HIV prevention efforts in Malawi resulted in notable decline in new HIV infections from 111,000 in 1992 to 19,000 in 2020, while AIDS deaths declined from 71,000 in 2004 to 10,800 in 2020.

The UN envoy expressed gratitude to the financial and technical support from The Global Fund, PEPFAR and the United States Government, bilateral partners, the civil society, and the private sector.



NAC ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, DR. ANDREW GONANI

Malawi Attains Epidemic Control But...

National AIDS Commission (NAC) says Malawi has attained epidemic control, meaning the country is in a position to manage the HIV and AIDS epidemic. However, he said there are some pockets of the population that are still bearing a heavy burden of HIV and adherence to treatment, stressing that it is only if these populations are included in the fight against HIV and AIDS that the gains made can be sustained.

“One such group is the Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) and the focus for this year’s World AIDS Day is on AGYW. The AGYW aged 15–24 remain at high risk for HIV in Malawi and account for 28 percent of the general population being infected by HIV, including children,” said Gonani.

He added: “An important contributor to AGYW’s vulnerability to HIV is pervasive harmful traditional practices, norms, and gender inequities. Therefore, there is need to allocate more resources to programmes and activities addressing AGYW, including education for a girl child.”

MALAWI’S FIGHT AGAINST THE HIV AND AIDS EPIDEMIC IS GUIDED BY THE NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN FOR HIV AND AIDS (2020-2025), WHICH IS ALIGNED TO THE 95:95:95 TREATMENT TARGETS TO BE ACHIEVED IN 2025.

Whopping 97% of Adults Virally Suppressed-MPHIA 2020 Study

The Principal Investigator and Director of the Department of HIV and AIDS Rose Nyirenda reported that the second Malawi Population-based HIV Impact Assessment (MPHIA) survey conducted between January 2020 and May 2021 to assess the country's progress towards HIV epidemic control has revealed that 97% of all adults on treatment had their viral load suppressed.

She made the announcement at the commemoration of the 2021 World AIDS Day held on December 1 at Bumba Primary School ground in Rumphi when she was presenting Key Study Findings of the MPHIA 2020. The first MPHIA survey was conducted from November 2015 to August 2016 to measure the status of Malawi's HIV response.

"Viral suppression is very paramount because it enables one to live a health life and prevent transmission of HIV to another person," she said adding that the development can have a dramatic effect on reducing the number of new infections. She recalled that the MPHIA 2016 showed good progress in regard to uptake of HIV treatment and viral load suppression in general but pointed out that there were some considerable gaps in HIV testing and in reaching out to young people, middle aged men and urban population.

She noted that based on the findings, the Ministry of Health together with all stakeholders had to devise target strategies to reach these groups. The 2020/2021 survey involved 13,000 household members from 15 years of age and above who gave their consent, got interviewed and had their blood samples taken.



The Principal Investigator and Director of the Department of HIV and AIDS Rose Nyirenda

In presenting the preliminary highlights of the survey in addition to the successful viral load suppression the Principal Investigator cited the following key findings among others:

The number of new infections has decreased from 4/1,000 in 2016 to 2/1,000 in 2020.

- HIV prevalence has declined from 10.6 to 8.9 between the surveys.
- Prevalence among adults between 45 and 54 remain much higher at over 20% but this is mainly due to the successful treatment program that enabled people who were infected in the late 1990s and early 2000 to survive and otherwise live a healthy life.
- The survey estimated that around 20,000 adults were newly infected with HIV this year. Although this is a significant reduction from previous years it shows that HIV epidemic is far from over in Malawi.

The Principal Investigator expressed gratitude to ICAP for successfully leading the implementation of the survey, to PEPFAR and CDC for technical and financial support, to all stakeholders for contributing to the success of the survey and to her fellow Malawians for generously participating in this survey.

CSO DEMAND 15% BUDGET ALLOCATION TO HEALTH

The Chairperson of the Board of Malawi Network of AIDS Service Organizations (MANASO) Maziko Matemba has called upon the Government of Malawi to increase the country's health budget from the current 9% to 15%. He made the sentiments at the commemoration of the 2021 World AIDS Day held on December 1 at Bumba Primary School ground in Rumphi District.

In April 2001, heads of state of African Union countries met and pledged to set a target of allocating at least 15% of their annual budget to health to improve the performance of the sector.

Matemba observed that amid the country's success towards achieving the UN target of 95:95:95 by 2025 Malawi is still lagging behind in infection rate among young girls and women a development that necessitates investing at least 25% of HIV spending in prevention programmes. He bemoaned that despite the internationally recommended 25% for prevention programmes, Malawi has allocated only 9%.



Maziko Matemba making a speech on behalf of CSOs

The HIV pandemic rate of infection on adolescent girls and young women is very scary as it accounts for 74% of new HIV infections in Malawi," said the board chairperson advising that as a group at high risk of contracting HIV it would be wise to come up with a solution. He however pointed out that the Civil Society Organisations have experience and expertise to contribute significantly towards reduction of HIV infection among young people through utilisation of the Community Led Monitoring, systematic contact tracing and differentiated service delivery (DSD) and existing partnership of CSOs with community structures with support from development partners.

The Board Chairperson reiterated a request made last year during the commemoration of the World AIDS Day from the CSOs in the HIV sector for an audience with the country's head of state for a comprehensive dialogue on HIV/AIDS issues for Malawi to successfully attain its vision of an inclusively wealthy and self-reliant nation by 2063 and Universal Health Coverage by 2030

In closing Mr. Matemba said that the CSOs are very thankful for the support from Government of Malawi, US Government, The Global Fund, UNAIDS, PEPFAR and development partners towards the national response to HIV/AIDS. He pointed out the need to also look into some health important issues like cervical cancer.

WORLD AIDS DAY 2021 HIGHLIGHTS IN PICTURES



The Red Ribbon, symbolizing commitment and solidarity from Government and different stakeholders



The Minister Visiting Pavilions







"Together we can end AIDS by 2030"

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