



Talking Points
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World AIDS Day 2006

“Strengthening Evidence Based Responses”

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Yang Berbahagia Dato' Dr. Haji Ramlee Rahmat, Director, Disease Control Division,
Ministry of Health,
Excellencies, Participants, Distinguished guests and colleagues
Members of the Press

Selamat Pagi dan Salam Sejahtera kepada semua

I would like to thank Dr. Han Tieru, WHO Representative and Chair of the UN Country Team HIV/AIDS of the Theme Group for organizing today's event and putting together such an exciting and fresh programme.

World AIDS Day was first declared by WHO in 1988, and is now marked globally every year on 1 December. World AIDS Day is not just about raising money for HIV/AIDS victims. It is also about increasing awareness, education and fighting prejudice. It's a time to advocate for stronger action to prevent new HIV infections, and to meet the needs and protect the human rights of people living with HIV/AIDS.

The theme for World AIDS Day this year is Accountability. This is promoted under the broader slogan, "Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise", which is the theme for the World AIDS Campaign, 2005 to 2010. The campaign aims to hold the world community accountable for delivering its promises and commitments on HIV/AIDS. In particular, in meeting the Millennium Development Goal target of halting and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic remains one of the world's most serious development crises. It has far reaching implications on societies, communities and families around the globe. In several countries, HIV/AIDS is undermining economic growth, increasing poverty, destroying human and social capital, and reversing development progress.

Globally, an estimated 40 million people were living with HIV at the end of 2006. Every minute of every day, some 8 people are infected and 6 people die. The pandemic is hitting hardest in sub-Saharan Africa, and almost everywhere else the disease is on the rise.

HIV knows no borders. In Malaysia, the first case of HIV infection was reported in 1986. Since, numbers of new cases have risen exponentially. By the end of 2005, roughly 64,000 Malaysians were reported as infected with HIV, of whom some 9,400 had developed AIDS. Over 90 per cent of HIV infections are males and about 70 per cent are Malays. And with the rising prevalence, adolescent girls and women are increasingly at risk. We must campaign to eliminate gender based violence which helps fuel the pandemic, and promote women's rights.

The MDG of halting and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015 is challenging. To meet this challenge, Malaysia needs to mobilize all levels of government, partner with civil society, religious leaders and the private sector, and scale up its response. A balanced multi-sectoral strategy of prevention, containment (including through harm reduction measures), treatment, care and support is an appropriate policy mix. The National Strategic Plan for HIV/AIDS (2006-2010) is a good start. We need to implement this with determination and a clear plan of action.

All UN agencies, as part of the UN Country Team's effort to support the Malaysian government and other stakeholders, are working hard to help reduce the spread of HIV infection in Malaysia. We are working with a broad range of partners, including governments, civil society, the private sector, Islamic leaders and the media, to generate a society-wide response that is gender sensitive and respectful of the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS. And we would like to see more money invested in HIV/AIDS programmes.

There is no quick-fix solution to the AIDS epidemic. We must continue to be vigilant to ensure that HIV/AIDS is contained, and ultimately eliminated. Malaysia's development gains that have been so carefully built up over several decades should not be compromised by allowing the rise in HIV/AIDS to go unchecked.

Meeting the MDG target of halting and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS, requires the involvement of more people from different walks of life, whether they are individuals or groups, be it religious groups, women's groups, trade unions or young or older persons. So let's all unite and work together. Keep our promise and deliver results. Stop AIDS.

Thank you.