

World AIDS Day 2018

Concept note

1. Theme and objectives

This year, PAHO's theme for WAD2018 will be aligned with WHO and UNAIDS: **“Know your status”**. Testing services are essential to achieving the 90-90-90 targets by 2020 and the objective 3 of the Sustainable Development Goals agenda. It will also be an opportunity to celebrate the **30th anniversary of the World AIDS Day (WAD30)** – a pioneering global health campaign first initiated by WHO in 1988.

PAHO/WHO World Aids Day 2018 aims to:

1. urge people to know their HIV infection status through testing, and to access HIV prevention, treatment and care services; and
2. urge policy-makers to promote a “health for all” agenda for HIV and related health services.

HIV testing services (HTS) are a unique opportunity and a door for those diagnosed with HIV to rapidly initiate lifesaving treatment and for those at higher risk of acquiring the virus to have immediate access to the effective recommended package of prevention services to remain negatives. Synergistically, PAHO promotes HTS within the framework of “combination HIV prevention” (CP). CP provides a person-centered approach to reduce the number of new infections, by combining biomedical and behavioral interventions with interventions that foster an enabling environment to overcome access barriers to health and prevention services.

On its 30th anniversary, the World AIDS Day campaign reminds us that we should not become complacent in our response to HIV. Nearly 25% of the people living with HIV do not know their status, and 40% of the people living with HIV still lack access to treatment and have unsuppressed infections in Latin América and the Caribbean (LAC). The future success of the HIV response requires us to look beyond HIV care and empower better linkages with broader health care. Doing so can help people with and at risk of HIV access the care they need – be it for TB, mental health, hepatitis or another condition. This strategy can help the world get on track to not only end HIV, but also achieve “health for all” by 2030.

PAHO/WHO representatives and staff are encouraged to collaborate with ministries of health, and regional, national and community partners in supporting advocacy and communication activities for World AIDS Day 2018.

2. Why this theme is relevant to the Americas?

- ◇ Significant progress has been made in the AIDS response in the region with 77% of people living with HIV knowing their status, 79% of them are in antiretroviral treatment, and 83% of those in treatment are virally suppressed.
- ◇ However, this progress has not yet translated into the decrease of new HIV infections in the region, particularly in Latin America, with 1% reduction since 2010 (estimated at 120,000 new persons infected/year).
- ◇ Approximately one third of new HIV infections occur among young people aged 15 to 24 years old, and over half among persons of key populations, a very disproportional burden considering their estimated population sizes.
- ◇ Gay men and other men who have sex with men (MSM) alone represent 41% of new infections in Latin America and 23% in the Caribbean in 2017
- ◇ Additionally, one third of persons with HIV in LAC only get diagnosed after becoming ill and symptomatic, when their immunity had already been seriously compromised (CD4<200).
- ◇ The highest rates of new HIV infections and death occur in places where higher-risk persons, mostly from key populations remain unaware, under-served or neglected. MSM, transgender women, sex workers, people who inject drugs, people in prisons and migrants face day-to-day barriers to access HIV testing and treatment services due to stigma, discrimination, and other structural barriers.

By addressing testing gaps particularly among key populations within the context of combination HIV prevention, can help the region to get on track to end AIDS and to achieve for Health for All by 2030.

2. Target audiences

In 2018, communication efforts by PAHO/WHO in LAC will target two key audiences using platforms such as public events, mass media, websites, visuals and social media.

1. Public: The “Know your status” theme helps to open the testing “gateway” to access further prevention, treatment and care. Testing rates are lowest among key populations, for whom infection rates are higher. Addressing discrimination and creating a more enabling and empowering environment for these populations is important.

2. Policy-makers: High-level decision-makers including presidents, prime ministers and ministers of health – as well as ministers of related branches such as finance, education and labor – can be targeted to support the “Know your status” theme, and to provide support for the “health for all” agenda for HIV and broader health services.

3. Campaign identity and materials

The following materials will be developed and disseminated by PAHO prior to World AIDS Day:

- ◇ two videos of “good practices” on HIV prevention and treatment services for key populations (Colectivo Amigos contra el Sida/Guatemala¹ and Clínica Condesa/Mexico²);
- ◇ one educational short video (less than 2 min) for social media on combination HIV prevention;
- ◇ one infographic on HIV testing services as a gateway into HIV prevention and care services;
- ◇ social media postcards with key messages on (1) combination HIV prevention, and key effective prevention health services recommended by WHO and still poorly implemented in LAC: (2) Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), (3) Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) for accidental consensual sex, (4) sexually transmitted infections (STI), (5) HIV testing, (6) self-testing, (7) treat all, and on (8) anti-stigma and discrimination;
- ◇ set of slides with regional epidemiologic information for Latin America and the Caribbean;
- ◇ updated PAHO HIV/STI web page with factsheets/Q&A/recent WHO/PAHO documents, and links to recent webinars promoted by PAHO in collaboration with key partners on HIV self-testing, assisted partner notification and PrEP;
- ◇ dedicated website for the WAD 2018;
- ◇ press release;
- ◇ banner to be downloaded by countries.

Additionally, the WHO corporate website www.who.int will have two major highlights: a dedicated website to World AIDS Day 2018 and a “spotlight story” on WAD30.

4. Recommendations of PAHO to expand HIV testing services coverage and efficiency in the Region:

The following recommendations are for steps to overcome barriers to access HIV testing services in Latin American and Caribbean countries by those most-at-risk of HIV infection:

¹ <https://casgt.org/>

² <http://www.condesadf.mx/>

- ◇ Offer HTS at flexible hours and convenient location, prioritizing rapid tests at the point of care and providing a same-day result with rapid initiation to treatment;
- ◇ Review and simplify HIV diagnosis algorithms based on the WHO recommendations, adopt pre-counseling information (instead of pre-test counseling), and increase the number trained non-professional providers;
- ◇ Adopt the WHO recommendation for assisted partner notification to increase the detection of persons living with HIV who do not know their status;
- ◇ Expand and take advantage of private initiatives to market self-testing and link this with public health activities in HIV prevention and treatment;
- ◇ Lower the age at which young people can obtain an HIV test without the consent of a parent or guardian, based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- ◇ Take advantage of the opportunities offered by new communication technologies to disseminate information about HTS and support linkage to care;
- ◇ Sensitize health sector personnel to provide service for the key populations free of discrimination;
- ◇ Offer HTS as part of the combination HIV prevention approach making available the complete package of services recommended by the WHO;
- ◇ Promote meaningful engagement of people living with HIV, members of key populations and civil society organizations in public health policies, service provision, monitoring of effectiveness and quality of services, and partnering to eliminate legal barriers to access care.