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World AIDS Day 2025: The Progress, the Gaps, and the Road Ahead for India

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HIV continues to be a major public health concern. Though HIV is now a chronic illness that can be managed with the efficient antiretroviral therapy, there are still gaps in early detection, prevention, and treatment. Achieving zero new infections requires increasing knowledge of and adherence to preventive measures like PrEP.

United Nation estimate 40.8 million persons are living with HIV globally and among them 25,44,000 are in India. In the year 2024 alone 1.3 million new infections worldwide and India has reported 68,450 newly infected persons with HIV. Today with the availability of potent Antiretroviral therapy, persons with HIV who have access to these medications never fall sick of AIDS anymore. Research has shown, the Life expectancy of HIV infected persons who are receiving Antiretroviral therapy and virologically suppressed are almost like persons who don't have HIV. This was possible due to the scientific discoveries of several antiretroviral medications which are given in combination to persons with HIV.

Improving Quality of Life for Patients

From a patient perspective, this progress translates to a radically improved quality of life. Individuals living with HIV can now work, travel, start families, and plan long-term goals—benefits unimaginable two decades ago. Access to counselling, adherence support, and regular follow-up care further empowers patients to stay healthy and socially integrated. There are still no vaccines to prevent HIV infection, but the introduction of a long-acting injectable antiviral medicine has opened new possibilities for HIV prevention. When used as part of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), this innovation offers a promising new avenue to reduce new infections—an important milestone in the absence of a cure.

Progress and Persistent Gaps in the Treatment

UNAIDS report shows that at the end of 2025, just before a collapse in global funding triggered a crisis in the global AIDS response, the remarkable efforts of communities and governments had brought down the numbers of new HIV infections by 40% and of AIDS-related deaths by 56% since 2010. But it also shows that huge gaps in HIV prevention remained, with 1.3 million new infections in 2024— almost unchanged from the year before. More than 95% of funding for HIV treatment and prevention in India are supported by Govt of India. 92% of the antiretroviral medications prescribed globally are supplied by Indian generic manufacturers and this is laudable. India is yet to implement pre-exposure prophylaxis(PrEP) through the National program, which is a gap. Efforts should be made along with political to implement PrEP in India to have Zero new infections.

The consensus behind the old model of financing the HIV response may be coming to an end, but the international community is forging a new, more sustainable path. It is time even lower- and middle-income countries take ownership to support the HIV prevention and treatment efforts along with their health care programs rather than depending on international assistance. Twenty-five of the 60 low- and middle-income countries have found ways to increase HIV spending from domestic resources into 2026 as shown in the UNAIDS report. This is the future of the HIV response— nationally owned and led, sustainable, inclusive and multisectoral. This transformation cannot happen overnight, however Global solidarity and renewed commitment from funding partners will be needed as countries plan and lead sustainable transitions towards self-financing. India has done this well and can lead the global efforts.

The Path to Ending AIDS as a Public Health Threat

The HIV response has already saved 26.9 million lives worldwide. With an HIV prevention revolution, we could end AIDS as a public health threat, saving many more lives as per UNAIDS. And it could be better value for money too: UNAIDS estimates that if the world including India embraces new technologies and newer interventions, the annual cost of the HIV response could fall by around $7 billion globally.

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