



## WORLD AIDS DAY 2010

### *Stop AIDS, Keep the Promise - Universal Access & Human Rights* **Get Tested. Get Treated.**

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Kuala Lumpur, 1<sup>st</sup> December 2010 – With almost **90,000** people living with HIV in Malaysia today and another **10** people tested positive each day, these statistics clearly reflect the severity of the possible pandemic that we and the world face. This is a topic of paramount importance that we cannot afford to neglect considering the deleterious consequences it has on the health and socioeconomic development of our nation.

Started on 1st December 1988, World AIDS Day is about raising funds, increasing awareness, fighting prejudice and improving education. World AIDS Day is important in reminding people that HIV has not gone away, and that there are many things still to be done. It provides an opportunity for all of us - individuals, communities and political leaders - to take action and ensure that human rights are protected and global targets for HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care are met.

***Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise – Universal Access & Human Rights*** is the theme for World AIDS Day 2010, promoted with the campaigning slogan, ***Get Tested. Get Treated.***

**Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise – Universal Access & Human Rights;** Universal access to effective prevention and treatment cannot occur without respecting human rights. The risk of HIV infection and its impact feeds on violations of human rights, including discrimination against women and marginalised groups such as sex workers, people who inject drugs and men who have sex with men. HIV also frequently begets human rights violations such as further discrimination and violence. Over the past decade the critical need for strengthening human rights to effectively respond to the epidemic and deal with its effects has become ever clearer. Protecting human rights and promoting public health are mutually reinforcing. Valuable progress has been made in increasing access to HIV/AIDS services, yet greater commitment is needed around the world if the goal of universal access is to be achieved. Millions of people continue to be infected with HIV every year. In low-and middle-income countries, less than half of those in need of antiretroviral therapy are receiving it, and too many do not have access to adequate care services. The protection of human rights is fundamental to combating the global HIV and AIDS epidemic. Violations against human rights fuel the spread of HIV, putting marginalised groups, such as injecting drug users and sex workers, at a higher risk of HIV infection. By promoting individual human rights, new infections can be prevented and people who have HIV can live free from discrimination.

**Get Tested. Get Treated.** The only way to know if you have HIV is to take a HIV Antibody Test, which is painless. Anonymous and confidential HIV Antibody Tests are available for free at government hospitals and clinics, and can also be done at private clinics. Results of the HIV Antibody Test are available in less than two weeks, and some tests can produce results in less than 10 minutes. Malaysian AIDS Council together with its Partner Organisations would like to urge all Malaysians to be aware of their HIV status as early access to treatment and support often increases quality of life and life expectancies of people living with HIV. In addition, HIV and AIDS treatment is free of charge in all government hospitals and clinics.

A number of Malaysians living with HIV have stepped forward, receiving treatment and leading productive healthy lives. They share their stories, lending hands to people in need and have touched many lives positively. While this is encouraging, in many other corners of Malaysia, a larger number of people are still shunned by ignorance, feared by stigma and discrimination, rendered inaccessible to treatment, care and support.

The President of Malaysian AIDS Council; Datuk Mohd Zaman Khan expresses “we have seen lights in recent years but let us not stop here. A greater commitment is needed from all parties to ensure we are heading to the day which Malaysia is free from negative impact of HIV and AIDS. Be you a government officer, executive, businessman, housewife or a student, your support is the most fundamental. Protect yourself, your family and friends from HIV. Get tested, get treated, today.”

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