



MALAYSIAN AIDS COUNCIL EMBARKS ON ROAD TO ZERO FOR WORLD AIDS DAY 2011

KUCHING, 1 DECEMBER 2011 - Every year on the first day of December, the world comes together in the face of a growing public health concern that has impacted on more than 33 million lives worldwide. The World AIDS Day is a celebration that provides an opportunity for all of us – individuals, communities and political leaders – to take action to ensure that human rights are protected and that our shared goals of creating a world free from negative impact of HIV/AIDS are met.

Getting to Zero, the universal theme for this year's World AIDS Day, is a rallying call for countries to amplify their efforts to achieve the three UNAIDS (The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS) *zero*'s in the global response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, i.e. 'Zero New Infections', 'Zero Discrimination' and 'Zero AIDS Related Deaths'. This campaign will run until 2015 to coincide with the deadline of the Millennium Development Goal of reversing the trend of the HIV epidemic.

In a statement to commemorate this year's World AIDS Day, President of the Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) Tan Sri Mohd Zaman Khan remarked, "**Getting to Zero** is a road map that will guide our next course of action. We are cognizant of the fact that the road to *Zero* is paved with insurmountable challenges, but rest assured, we are anything but daunted. Perseverance in the face of adversity is the driving force behind our collective effort to put a halt to this epidemic."

Since the epidemic was first established in Malaysia in 1986, a total of 91,362 cases of HIV infections have been cumulatively reported, while 12,943 lives have been lost to AIDS related conditions, as of 2010. More than 70 per cent of the reported cases were attributed to unsafe drug injecting practices, although sexual transmitted cases of HIV are steadily on the increase. "We are experiencing a shift in the mode of HIV transmission in the country, whereby in 2010, cases of sexually transmitted HIV surpassed those via the drug injecting route, for the first time," added Mohd Zaman Khan. An average of 3,000 new HIV infections are reported to the national HIV surveillance system yearly. Cases of new HIV infections in the female population are notably on the rise too, which accounted for about 20 per cent in 2010 compared to a mere 5 per cent 10 years ago.



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The **Getting to Zero** campaign reaffirms the public health strategies employed in the national response to the current realities of the HIV epidemic. The Needle and Syringe Exchange Programme will be aggressively scaled up nationwide to reduce the risk of HIV transmission in people who inject drugs, while measures to mitigate the risk of sexual transmission of HIV will continue to be strengthened to address vulnerabilities in key populations such as sex workers. Harm Reduction initiatives as such are hoped to help us realise our vision of 'Zero New Infections'.

Working towards 'Zero Discrimination', MAC is committed to intensify its advocacy efforts to create an enabling environment for people living with, and communities most affected by, HIV. Leadership in and commitment to the multisectoral response to HIV will be strengthened among religious, political and grassroots leaders alike to reduce the negative impact that HIV/AIDS-associated stigma and discrimination have brought about.

Improving access to HIV treatment and care services for people living with HIV is key to achieving 'Zero AIDS Related Deaths'. MAC works very closely with the relevant authorities to address barriers that impede access to HIV services. This goal also drives MAC to create greater awareness, especially among communities most affected by HIV, on the importance of seeking early diagnosis and treatment to prevent the HIV disease progression to AIDS.

As MAC establishes its commitments to 'Getting to Zero', each and every one of us is also urged to take the opportunity that the World AIDS Day offers to renew our resolve to fight the epidemic in our own personal capacity. Take part in as many meaningful World AIDS Day related events in the country and learn how you too can play your part in 'Getting to Zero'. Please find attached to this message a copy of calendar of events by MAC and our Partner Organisations throughout the months of November and December 2011.

ABOUT MALAYSIAN AIDS COUNCIL

The Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) was established in 1992 to serve as an umbrella organisation to support and coordinate the efforts of organisations working on HIV/AIDS issues in Malaysia. MAC, in partnership with government agencies, private sector and international organisations, ensures a committed and effective response by NGOs working on HIV/AIDS issues in Malaysia. MAC, comprising the Secretariat and its Partner Organisations, work together as a team to provide nationwide coverage and serve as the common voice for the community. Besides coordinating and streamlining programmes with its Partner Organisations, the MAC Secretariat also provides these organisations with the necessary training, funds and other resources to implement effective HIV/AIDS programmes within various communities in Malaysia.

Kindly contact Media & Communications department, Malaysian AIDS Council for further information.
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