

UNITED NATIONS



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UNMISET

United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor

Public Information Office

Press Release

World AIDS Day commemorated in Timor-Leste

1 December 2004: World AIDS Day is commemorated worldwide today with the United Nations calling on the international community to help accelerate a response to HIV/AIDS by encouraging people to address female vulnerability to the disease.

In Timor-Leste, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Dr Sukehiro Hasegawa attended an event organized as part of a series of activities organized by the Ministry of Health, UNMISET, UN Agencies and international non-governmental organizations to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS at the national level.

“With more than 39 million people who are HIV positive globally and many regions facing diverse epidemics, the international community must unite to find a sustainable solution urgently,” said Dr Hasegawa.

“Even though Timor-Leste has a very low prevalence rate, we cannot afford to become complacent. The key is to find and adopt suitable prevention programmes on HIV/AIDS,” he added.

Using the theme of ‘Have You Heard Me Today?’, World AIDS Day this year focuses on raising awareness about the many issues affecting women and girls living with HIV/AIDS.

Worldwide, young women and girls are more susceptible to contracting HIV than men and boys, with some studies showing they can be 2.5 times more likely to be infected with the virus. Their vulnerability is primarily due to inadequate knowledge about AIDS, insufficient access to HIV prevention services, the inability to negotiate safer sex, as well as a lack of female-controlled HIV prevention methods.

At same time, all over the world women do not enjoy the same rights and access to employment, property and education as women. Women and girls are also more likely to face sexual violence, which can accelerate the spread of the virus.

A report released by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNAIDS last week, shows that women make up nearly half of the 37.2 million adults (aged 15-49) living with HIV worldwide. In sub-Saharan Africa, three quarters of all 15-24 year olds living with HIV are females.

Details of the address by the SRSG and other events of the day are as follows:

Date: Wednesday, 1 December 2004
Time: 5:30 pm
Venue: Campo Democrasia, Dili
Contact: Mr Ricardo Lobo, Chief, Public Information Office, on +670 723 0684.