

World AIDS Day 2016



A MEDIA MONITORING REPORT (20 November - 1 December)



Prepared by: **SUDEEP UPRETY AND BIPUL LAMICHHANE**
Health Research and Social Development Forum (HERD), Nepal



Introduction

AIDS is a serious pandemic caused by the spread of HIV infection that weakens the body immune system, leaving it unable to fight off illness. HIV can be transmitted via the exchange of a variety of body fluids from infected individuals, such as blood, breast milk, and semen/vagina secretions. More than 35 million deaths have been attributed to HIV till date. Much technological advances and progress has been made on HIV prevention and control since its inception but still the problem is persistent and is imposing heavy burden to countries, families and individuals affected. The stigma associated with AIDS is massive making it harder for the patients to discuss and seek treatment. World AIDS day is celebrated on December 1 every year as an attempt to raise awareness, provide support and to mourn for those who have died of AIDS.

Objectives

The major objective of this media monitoring was to collect the stories reported in country and globally in the build up to the World AIDS Day on December 1 as an attempt to identify the current trends and progress made for prevention and control of AIDS. Also through the media monitoring, we seek to have a quick glimpse of the context of AIDS in Nepal in comparison to rest of the world as reported in the media.

Methods

This media monitoring study was carried out for a period of **10 days prior to World AIDS Day**. The study meant to gather news and analyse the current global situation and efforts to prevent and control AIDS. The news were gathered using various national and international newspapers, magazines, international journals and other publications along with social medias like Facebook and Twitter. The news were gathered from The Himalayan Times, The Guardian, Science Mag, Beliot Daily News, Voa News, NewsHub, The Washington Post, Daily Republic, Citizen Digital, The Hindu etc. A total of 28 media stories (news and articles) were recorded in Microsoft Excel detailing the date, title, sources and links to the articles. The articles were then synthesised and categorised into the following themes;

THE CURRENT PICTURE OF AIDS

According to the [USAID](#) reports, AIDS has been responsible for more than 65 million infections and 35 million deaths since the 1980's. The UNAIDS Program estimate that more than 36 million people are currently living with HIV, with 2.1 million new cases every year. Nevertheless, there has been a consistent scale up of treatment for AIDS which had dropped the deaths related to AIDS by 45% with only 1.1 million deaths occurring in 2015. It had been reported that currently more than 18 million people are now accessing living saving AIDS treatment. Furthermore, [UNAIDS](#) claims that today people living with HIV have been receiving treatments causing half the number of illness and casualties compared to a decade ago. According to them the world is in track to meet the target of 30

million people living with treatment by 2020.

In Goa, apparently there are 253 children and adolescents living with HIV and are not receiving any sort of medical attention. The [NGO forum in Goa](#) has ensured that these children and adolescents will not be left behind and will be given proper care. Meanwhile in [Indonesia](#), compared to other provinces, the supply of ART in Bali for those suffering from HIV/AIDS remains sufficient. According to Bali Provincial Health Department, there are 6,316 people afflicted with HIV/AIDS who are receiving ART. According to the [New Zealand AIDS Foundation](#), newly diagnosed people with HIV infections are being denied access to medication until their CD4 count has dropped below 500

Meanwhile [Nepal](#) is known to be making a progress in the fight against HIV. In Nepal the adult prevalence of HIV is 0.2 percent compared to the global prevalence of 0.8 percent. Through the proactive measures of the government, a remarkable progress has been made by Nepal in its fight against HIV. According to the [National Center for AIDS and STD Control](#) in Nepal, more than 85 percent of the total HIV infections in Nepal have been found to be transmitted through unprotected sex. In Nepal the risk of infection is particularly high among people who share needles and syringes, sex workers from LGBT group, inmates and migrants who lack awareness and fail to use precautions.

VULNERABILITIES

Thousands of girls and women are still being infected with HIV every week in Africa according to UNAIDS chief and many of these adolescent girls are unaware of the fact that they have been infected and

many do not seek any sort of help or treatment because they cannot tell their families because of the stigma associated. These women abide a [triple threat](#) i.e. they are at high risk of infection, have lower testing rates and have poor compliance with treatments. These women are living in a challenging environment with insufficient access to food and education and are known to be in severe [danger of AIDS](#).

EVENTS

Use of [Digital Communication](#) is advised in World AIDS Day. People are encouraged to use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other digital platforms to creatively connect with and reach out to diverse audiences for raising awareness and support for HIV victims. The [Beliot Public Health Initiative](#) will be hosting its AIDS Day event at Beliot College's Science Center by providing free HIV testing for people.

IC Red Week ([#ICRW2016](#)) had promoted HIV/AIDS awareness around the Iowa City area, which involved events like comprehensive HIV/AIDS panel with guest speakers representing local, state and national spheres, film screening, display of AIDS quilt panel, commemorative events giving recognition to those affected by HIV/AIDS and more.

Furthermore, Jimmy Kimmel and Bono are uniting for a special star studded episode of [Jimmy Kimmel Live!](#) In honor of World Aids Day involving celebrities like Kristen Bell, DJ Khaled, Hasley, Herbie Hancock, Neil Patrick Harris, The Killers, Julia Roberts and Channing Tatum.

HIV/AIDS FUNDING

The [Global Fund](#) has raised an amount of over 12.9 billion US\$ from international donors as a part of a campaign aimed at eradicating AIDS along with malaria and tuberculosis by 2030. The [US Consulate](#)

[General](#) in Lagos in Nigeria has said that the US government has disbursed and amount of 3.4 billion dollars to support the Nigerian HIV/AIDS response in Lagos.

The Institute of Human Virology (IHV) at the University of Maryland had announced that more than \$138 million in multiple five-year grants has been awarded by the [Centers for Disease Control](#) and Prevention to combat HIV/AIDS in Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, and Nigeria. Meanwhile according to [Vietnam's HIV/AIDS Prevention Agency](#), Vietnam will be facing a huge budget deficit in the next 5 years. Currently only 4.4 million US\$ has been allocated for HIV/AIDS while the demand is of approximately of 27 million US\$.

THE STIGMA

In [France](#), mayors are attempting to censor a campaign which aims to encourage gay and bisexual men to use condoms and provide information about the medications and vaccinations they can get to reduce their chances of getting HIV and other STD. They claim that such campaigns can disturb the minds of children and other innocent people.

The Health Minister of [Tanzania](#) had announced that Tanzania will ban HIV/AIDS outreach projects aimed at gay men, pending a review which forced closure to US funded AIDS programs in Tanzania. Meanwhile in [Kenya](#), the National AIDS Control Council (NACC) argues that traditional beliefs and practices are some of the factors hindering the fight against HIV.

Doctors in [India](#) have said that people suffering from HIV/AIDS should not be seen as if they have committed some crime. Treating AIDS patients requires proper support and acceptance by the victim's family members. Stigma and discrimination

prevents patients from getting tested and accessing care and treatment, resulting in further transmission and increase in AIDS morbidity and mortality. Also the current [Bill of HIV](#) in India has shocked the HIV community as it weakens the people's right to access. The HIV community has rejected the bill and have demanded the removal of the phrase "as far as possible" from the proposed legislation.

NEW ADVANCEMENTS

Several new development of drugs and vaccines have been made for combating HIV. [China's](#) national drug authority has examined clinical research on domestically produced anti-HIV drug in its final phase and is awaiting approval. Once approved, the new generation drug, named Albuvirtide is expected to be the world's first long acting injection for HIV treatment.

It has been found that a new drug known as '[integrase inhibitor](#)' can act much faster in the reduction of transmission risk. A triple regimen based on an integrase inhibitor decreases the viral load in semen and instantly reduces the risk of HIV transmission.

Also the first trial of a potential vaccine (HVTN 702) has begun in [South Africa](#) and is showing positive effects, raising hopes that it will bring an end to the epidemic. If the vaccine is successfully deployed along with the current prevention tools, this could be the final nail in the coffin for [HIV](#) in South Africa.

In the [US](#), researchers are working to use the body's own immune system to keep the virus in track. Researchers have found that antibodies suppresses the HIV virus for 21 days and now researchers are working on identifying a combination of antibodies that can suppress the virus up to a year.

The Way Forward

HIV is still a major global public health issue despite the substantial progress made over the past two decades. Better governance and coordination along with high service coverage and reduced inequality can help in management, prevention and control of AIDS. Getting the support of leaders and influential figures in society can help to raise awareness and influence norms regarding HIV.

Although there is no cure for HIV, effective treatments are available enabling people with HIV to live long and healthy lives. For the people living with HIV, taking effective ART can reduce the risk of further transmission onto their partners. The best way to prevent HIV is to use precaution and avoid sharing of needles. People with HIV should be encouraged to take regular exercise and eat healthy diet to minimize the risk of getting serious illness.

HIV related services needs to be scaled up with better clinical management and strategic activities in order to be able to deal with the heavy burden imposed by HIV globally. More research, funding and better policies are required to be in a better position to deal with the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Countries need to unite and work together in order to solve the problem of HIV/AIDS in the near future.

Correspondence:

sudeep.uprety@herd.org.np