

RENEWED FOCUS ON HIV AND AIDS AS WE BEGIN THE NEW YEAR

At the beginning of a new year, a lot of people reflect on the past year and set resolutions for the year that has just began. Among the usual goals of health, fitness, and personal growth, there's one resolution that deserves renewed attention: ***tackling the challenge of HIV and AIDS in Eswatini.***

It is now a known fact that Eswatini has made significant progress in combating HIV and AIDS, achieving notable milestones in recent years. The country surpassed the 90-90-90 targets reaching 95-95-95, i.e. 95 percent of people living with HIV are aware of their status, 95 percent of those diagnosed are on antiretroviral therapy, and 95 percents of individuals on treatment have achieved viral suppression. The progress has led to a substantial reduction in both new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths.

Regardless of this significant strides, HIV and AIDS remain a pressing public health threat, affecting thousands of people in the Kingdom of Eswatini. Despite advancements in treatment and awareness, stigma and misinformation continue to hinder progress. However, the new year offers an opportunity for personal and collective action to combat these challenges.

For individuals, resolving to learn more about HIV and AIDS can be transformative. Understanding the virus, its transmission, and staying updated on advancements in HIV prevention and treatment is crucial. Educating oneself can dispel myths, misconceptions and reduce stigma, fostering a compassionate environment for those living with HIV. This knowledge also empowers individuals to protect themselves and others, highlighting the importance of regular testing and safe practices.

This year, a renewed focus on HIV prevention should be high on our collective list of resolutions. As the world advances in healthcare and understanding of diseases, focusing on effective HIV prevention strategies is essential to curb its spread and improve lives globally. Enhancing awareness and education is the first step in renewing focus on HIV prevention. Public campaigns and educational programs must be prioritized to ensure communities are informed about transmission modes, prevention methods, and treatment options. Knowledge plays a crucial role in reducing stigma and encouraging safer behaviours.

Accessibility to preventive measures is another critical aspect. Expanding access to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) can significantly reduce the risk of infection in high-risk populations. Regular HIV testing should also be encouraged, as early detection is key in managing the virus and preventing its spread.

As the new year unfolds, many individuals take the opportunity to reflect on their lives and set resolutions that encourage personal growth and positive change. In the territory of healthcare, a resolution to renew focus on HIV treatment is also particularly crucial. Renewing focus on HIV treatment involves a multi-faceted approach that includes enhancing public awareness, improving access to healthcare amongst other things. Public awareness campaigns play a vital role in educating people about HIV transmission, prevention, and the importance of getting tested.

Access to healthcare is another critical component in the renewed focus on HIV treatment. Ensuring that antiretroviral therapies are easily available and accessibly for all people living with HIV, is essential for managing the virus and preventing its spread. This involves not only the distribution of medication in bulk but also the provision of comprehensive healthcare services, including mental health support and counselling, which are vital for the overall well-being of those affected.

Despite significant medical advancements in the treatment and management of HIV, stigma remains a daunting barrier for those affected by the virus. Stigmatization of people living with HIV leads to discrimination, social isolation, and even avoidance of necessary medical care. This not only affects individuals' mental and physical health but also hampers broader public health efforts aimed at prevention and treatment. By addressing stigma, we can enhance the quality of life for those living with the virus and encourage a more compassionate and informed society.

To actively combat this stigma, we must engage in awareness and education. A lack of knowledge often fuels fear and misconceptions about HIV transmission and its implications. Communities must be equipped with accurate information through campaigns, workshops, and inclusive dialogues that encourage empathy and understanding.

Communities play a vital role in the fight against HIV and AIDS. By organizing awareness campaigns and supporting local health initiatives, communities can create an inclusive environment that encourages dialogue and support. In particular, schools and workplaces can provide crucial platforms for HIV education, fostering an informed and empathetic community.

Government ministries and organizations in the country must continue prioritizing HIV and AIDS in their health agendas. Additionally, policies that ensure access to healthcare and support services for those affected by HIV are crucial components of a successful public health strategy.

Ultimately, addressing HIV and AIDS requires a multi-faceted approach. As

the new year begins, individuals, communities, and leaders must join forces and commit to long-term solutions. By fostering open discussions, advocating for policies that ensure healthcare equity, and supporting research, the country can make further strides toward a future where HIV and AIDS are no longer public health threat.

As we dive into the new year, let us resolve not only to improve ourselves but also to contribute to a cause that affects many. With collective effort, 2025 can be a year of significant progress in the fight against HIV and AIDS, a year where compassion, understanding, and empowerment define our national community.