



Press Release

1 DECEMBER 2008

Taking time to reflect on the AIDS epidemic

United Nations Agencies in Lao PDR highlight the 20th World AIDS Day

On December 1, 2008 people around the world come together to mark the 20th anniversary of the World AIDS Day. This is the time to reflect on the AIDS epidemic and renew our dedication to the AIDS response.

WHO/UNAIDS estimate that worldwide, by the end of 2007, an estimated 33 million people were living with HIV, 2.7 million people become newly infected with HIV, and 2 million people died of AIDS.

In his message on World AIDS Day 2008, the Secretary-General of the United Nations says: "The challenge now is to sustain leadership. We have to build on what we have started. And we have to maintain this momentum."

The United Nations Country Team in Lao PDR organized HIV awareness activities for its staff during the week leading up to World AIDS Day, ending in "Red Friday". UN staff wore red to work to commemorate World AIDS Day and learned about the "UN Cares" workplace programme which is designed to reduce the impact of HIV on the UN workplace. Representatives of people infected and affected by HIV from two support groups in Vientiane Capital and the Lao National Network of People Living with HIV joined UN staff to share their knowledge and experiences of living with HIV in Lao PDR.

The UN campaigning slogan for 2008 is "Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise.", recognizing that without leadership we will never get ahead of the epidemic. Although tangible and remarkable progress has been made, much more needs to be done worldwide to scale up towards universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.

"The epidemic is far from over, but together we can make a real difference. We've started now to save lives but we need to save many more." concluded the Executive Director of UNAIDS in his World AIDS Day message. The Secretary-General of the United Nations urges us all to respond to this challenge by saying: "On this World AIDS Day, let us all pledge to be "hope-givers" who offer encouragement and take action to create a future without AIDS."

For more information please contact Janet Pontin at the UN Public Information Office
Tel 267777 ext: 715, janet.pontin@undp.org
or Viengsompasong Inthavong in the Office of the Resident Coordinator
Tel 267777 ext: 753, viengsompasong.inthavong@undp.org

Notes for editors:

The United Nations Country Team in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is committed to supporting the efforts of the Government to improve the life of all citizens, especially those most vulnerable. We shall continue to work closely with the Government and all development partners for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Our collective endeavour is to assist the people of Lao PDR to achieve progress and better standards of living for all.