

WORLD AIDS DAY 2025

Records show strong progress in controlling the HIV epidemic

By Special Correspondent

Every year on the first of December, the global community pauses to observe World AIDS Day. It is a day of remembrance, unity, reflection, and renewed dedication to ending the HIV epidemic.

This year's commemoration arrives at a moment when nations around the world are striving to discover new, innovative ways of reducing HIV infections and strengthening both prevention and treatment services.

The global theme for World AIDS Day 2025 is Breaking Free from Challenges: Transforming the Way We Respond to HIV/AIDS. This theme reflects the commitment of the international community, including Tanzania, to dismantle barriers that hinder access to prevention, care, and treatment services.

It highlights the understanding that the world is constantly changing, and therefore, strategies for addressing HIV must evolve accordingly.

The theme places emphasis on local investment, technological advancement, wide partnerships, and innovative service delivery models.

AIDS Day commemoration in Zanzibar

In Zanzibar, the 2025 commemoration is expected to take place today at the Sheikh Idriss Abdul Wakil Hall in Mnazimmoja.

The commemoration goes with the theme: Breaking Financial Barriers, Strengthening the HIV/AIDS Response.

According to Dr. Ahmed Mohamed Khatib, the Executive Director of the Zanzibar AIDS Commission, this theme signifies the urgent need to increase domestic funding, reduce reliance on external support, and invest more in prevention, treatment, community education, and integrated health programmes.

HIV Situation in Zanzibar
According to UNAIDS data for 2024 and 2025, the world

has recorded strong progress in controlling the HIV epidemic, although the global goal of ending AIDS by 2030 has not yet been met.

Current statistics indicate that millions of people continue to live with HIV, while a significant number have newly acquired the virus within the past year. Hundreds of thousands worldwide still

low in the general population which is currently below 0.5%.

"Of those diagnosed, the overwhelming majority are already on treatment, demonstrating strong retention within care and high levels of adherence," said Dr. Ahmed.

He attributed the achievements to effective leadership, community

Challenges that slow down the national response

In discussing the obstacles, Dr. Ahmed stated that several challenges continue to slow down the national response.

He mentioned one of the most pressing concerns as the low level of awareness among young people.

He feels that many adolescents still lack essential

Furthermore, Dr. Ahmed disclosed that stigma and discrimination remain serious barriers, with people preventing from seeking services, particularly those within key populations.

"Systemic and social obstacles continue to restrict access to quality care, making it essential for communities and institutions to work together to eliminate stigma in all its forms," he said.

Government commitment
The Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar through Zanzibar AIDS Commission has reaffirmed its dedication to strengthening the fight against HIV.

Dr. Ahmed mentions a number of areas that the government has committed itself to work on. These include expanding community education, increasing access to testing and counselling services, enhancing integrated healthcare, safeguarding the availability of antiretroviral therapies, and intensifying the fight against stigma and discrimination.

According to Dr. Ahmed, these efforts aim to protect the progress already made and accelerate momentum toward an HIV-free generation.

Making a call to the Zanzibar community, Dr. Ahmed reminded citizens that World AIDS Day 2025 is not only a moment of remembrance but also a powerful call to action; and its is therefore important to adopt improved strategies, embrace scientific and technological advancements, and reinforce social solidarity.

"The vision of a future where no new infections occur, no lives are lost to AIDS, and no individual faces stigma or discrimination is within reach. Achieving such a future requires unity, commitment, and responsibility at every level of society. Together, we can build a healthier, stronger, and HIV-free generation if we act with determination and collective purpose today", he said.



lose their lives to AIDS-related illnesses.

At the same time, millions of people now access lifesaving antiretroviral therapy, which is a remarkable achievement of international health systems.

Tanzania on its side continues to register commendable progress in its national response. Through TACAIDS and the Ministry of Health, the country has expanded access to testing, counselling, and treatment services.

Explaining the HIV situation in Zanzibar, Dr. Ahmed said that Zanzibar has maintained one of the lowest HIV prevalence rates in East Africa.

According to him, the most recent data for 2025 shows that only a small proportion of the population is living with HIV, the HIV prevalence is very

engagement, and sustained investment in integrated health services, including counselling, testing, and treatment programmes offered across the islands.

Although prevalence is low in the general population, Dr. Ahmed highlighted that some groups remain disproportionately affected.

"Adults aged forty-five and above carry a significant burden of infection. Women are still more likely to be infected than men. Key populations, including female sex workers, men who have sex with men, and people who inject drugs, continue to experience elevated rates of HIV. These populations require targeted and sustained interventions that respond to their specific needs, protect their rights, and ensure that no group is left behind," said Dr. Ahmed.

knowledge about HIV prevention, testing, and the importance of treatment, leaving them highly vulnerable. But there is another challenge:

"Another major challenge is the decline in donor funding. The financial support traditionally provided by development partners has been gradually decreasing. As a result, sustaining HIV programmes has become more difficult unless domestic financing is significantly strengthened," Dr. Ahmed observed.

He also underlined the need for stronger integration of HIV services with other health services. To him, linking HIV care with reproductive health, maternal health, tuberculosis services, and psychosocial support would ensure a more effective and efficient health system.