

Rwanda has set an ambitious goal to eliminate new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths by 2030. This commitment was highlighted during this year's World AIDS Day commemoration in Rubavu District.

The country has made significant strides in combating HIV/AIDS, but the epidemic remains a public health challenge, accounting for at least seven out of every 100 deaths recorded daily in Rwanda.

Dr. Sabin Nsanzimana, Rwanda's Minister of Health, noted that daily new infections have dropped from 25 in previous years to nine. Despite this progress, he emphasized the need for concerted efforts to further reduce these numbers and achieve the ambitious 2030 target.



Dr. Sabin Nsanzimana, the Minister of Health

Among the notable achievements is the reduction of mother-to-child HIV transmission rates, now below 1%. This success is largely attributed to the country's dedication rolling out Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) program in all public health facilities. More than 99% of HIV-positive pregnant women in Rwanda receive treatment, effectively preventing the transmission of the virus to their newborns.

Rwanda has also been lauded for its prioritization of universal access to HIV services. The country is on track to meet the UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets by 2025, aiming for 95% of people living with HIV to know their status, 95% of those diagnosed to access treatment, and 95% of those on treatment to achieve viral suppression.



Emerging Challenges and Strategic Responses

However, the minister raised concerns about the growing number of new infections among the youth and persistent challenges faced by vulnerable groups, particularly female sex workers, who account for 35% of new infections.

To address these challenges, the Ministry of Health launched a six-month nationwide campaign focused on raising awareness, improving service accessibility,

reducing stigma, and fostering community collaboration.

Prof. Claude Muvunyi, Director General of the Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC), outlined the campaign's goals, which include enhancing HIV prevention, testing, and treatment services. Special attention will be given to high-risk regions, including the Eastern and Western Provinces and the City of Kigali.

Prof. Muvunyi also emphasized the importance of integrating approaches to tackle other emerging health threats, such as Mpox and Marburg virus, alongside HIV prevention efforts.

Rwanda's progress in the fight against HIV/AIDS has been bolstered by strong partnerships, including support from PEPFAR, the Global Fund, and civil society organizations. These collaborations have transformed AIDS from a death sentence into a manageable chronic condition.



During the event, partners called for targeted interventions in areas with the greatest potential for impact, such as addressing youth infections, improving communication strategies, and reducing stigma.

Under this year's theme, "End AIDS, My Responsibility," the role of individuals in preventing HIV was underscored. Attendees committed to supporting those affected, preventing new infections, and combating stigma to achieve a future free of AIDS.

Forty-three years after AIDS was first identified, the disease has claimed millions of lives, with Africa bearing the heaviest burden. Rwanda's efforts represent a beacon of hope and a model for other nations striving to end the epidemic.