



Press Release
UN agencies in the oPt Mark World AIDS Day
By Launching a Series of Public Awareness Activities

Jerusalem, December 2, 2009 – To increase awareness among the Palestinian population and improve their outlook on the prevention of HIV, the United Nations agencies in the occupied Palestinian territory, in cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Health, are organizing a series of events during the month of December to mark World AIDS Day – 1st December.

The events, with the slogan “Keep the promise ... together we can overcome HIV/AIDS”, will be carried out in the villages and cities of Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza. At the community level, people will be informed about the route of spread and ways of preventing HIV and AIDS through workshops and training sessions with community leaders, women centres, health clinics and others.

Special attention will also be given to raising the awareness of schoolchildren and young people through youth centres, drawing competitions, audiovisuals and scouts marches.

“The United Nations is at the forefront of the response to HIV and AIDS worldwide and in the occupied Palestinian territory. This year, we launched a comprehensive programme to improve HIV related services which we hope provide clarity to some of these issues”, said Maxwell Gaylard, UN Resident Coordinator. “We all have parents, children, spouses, relatives and friends. The more people that are well informed the better. We want to break the silence that surrounds HIV”, added Gaylard.

The UN Resident Coordinator, Mr. Maxwell Gaylard and representatives of UN agencies in the oPt have also officially launched the ‘UN Cares’ initiative, which addresses issues of HIV within the workplace and within families of UN staff. The initiative is being introduced in the oPt as a follow up to the Global Fund to fight HIV and AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria programme implemented by various UN agencies namely UNICEF, UNFPA, UNODC, UNRWA, UNIFEM, WHO, and coordinated by UNDP as Principal Recipient. It also offers an opportunity for increased joint programming between the UN agencies to help deliver as one. Similar launch activities are expected to take place in Gaza and Ramallah on 8 and 15 December 2009 respectively.

According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, the cumulative number of HIV and AIDS patients in the West Bank and Gaza reached 63 cases, with a projected estimate of 200-500 people living with the HIV virus. In 2008, an estimated 35,000 people in the Middle East and North Africa became infected with HIV, and 20,000 AIDS-related deaths occurred, according to UNAIDS.

This year’s world’s AIDS day theme is ‘**Universal Access and Human Rights**’. It provides an opportunity for all to take united action towards protecting human rights and attaining access for all to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. It also acts as a call to countries to remove laws that discriminate against people living with HIV, women and marginalized groups.

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Participating agencies: United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.