

MEDIA RELEASE

UNICEF SAYS EDUCATING YOUNG PEOPLE ON HIV/AIDS IS THE POWER TO COMBAT ITS THREATS IN MYANMAR

HIV/AIDS POSES GROWING RISKS TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN MYANMAR

Yangon, 01 December 2008 – Today, on World AIDS Day, UNICEF says giving education on HIV/AIDS, especially for young people will stop the spread of the disease.

“Young people have a higher propensity for risk-taking behaviour which exposes them to avoidable risks including exposure to HIV” said UNICEF Representative in Myanmar Ramesh Shrestha. It is estimated that there are approximately 240,000 people living with HIV in Myanmar, of which approximately two thirds are under 34 years of age.

“If we are able to reach all young people with correct messages on HIV which could change their knowledge and practices in a positive way we can break the cycle of HIV infection in Myanmar” said Mr. Shrestha.

Ignorance makes young people vulnerable to the disease. With global campaigns such as *United against AIDS*, UNICEF targets this ignorance, by spreading information about prevention, in particular among the most-at-risk group of 15 to 24-years old.

The Myanmar National Strategic Plan (2006-10) of the National AIDS Program also identifies primary prevention of HIV among young people as high priority.

In Myanmar, approximately 100,000 women are currently living with HIV. With this there are risks for many newborns to be infected with HIV.

“While many challenges are still there, progress has also made in many areas,” noted Ramesh Shrestha. “Today in Myanmar, students across the country are learning how to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS and other threats to their wellbeing. More than one third of all townships in Myanmar have Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV (PMCT) services.”

“However, more remains to be done. UNICEF will continue to promote knowledge on prevention of HIV/AIDS among young people as they are moving onto adulthood. It is important that they make informed decisions and avoid risk taking behaviours which may expose them to HIV infection” he added.

In Myanmar, UNICEF has supported the introduction of HIV/AIDS prevention and “life skills” curriculum in primary and secondary schools nationwide, helping millions of children gain knowledge and develop skills that can help them stay healthy. UNICEF also works with NGOs to deliver life skills trainings to those adolescents and young people who are out of school.

For further information please contact:

Sandar Linn, Communication Officer, UNICEF in Myanmar

Phone: (95 1) 375 527-32; Fax: (95 1) 375 552; Email: slinn@unicef.org