Ever since the first case of human immunodeficiency virus-acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV-AIDS) was confirmed in North America in 1968, the disease has only grown in magnitude to assume the role of a “modern epidemic.” It has been estimated that about 37.9 million people globally were living with HIV and about 1.7 million people became newly infected with HIV at the end of 2018. About 8.1 million people did not know that they were living with HIV.\(^1\)

Today, HIV remains one of the largest pandemics in the world. HIV is the same virus that can lead to AIDS. The first confirmed case of HIV-AIDS in India was in the year 1986. Many initiatives have been undertaken both at global and national levels for controlling the disease. Observation of World AIDS Day is one such initiative.

World AIDS Day takes place on December 1 each year. It is an opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV, to show support for people living with HIV, and to commemorate those who have died from an AIDS-related illness. Founded in 1988, World AIDS Day was the first-ever global health day. World AIDS Day is important because it reminds the public and government that HIV has not gone away – there is still a vital need to raise money, increase awareness, fight prejudice, and improve education.\(^2\)

Each year, organizations and individuals across the world bring attention to the HIV epidemic, endeavor to increase HIV awareness and knowledge, and speak out against HIV stigma.

The theme for the 2019 observance is “Ending the HIV/AIDS Epidemic: Community by Community” which stresses on the difference these communities are making to end the HIV epidemic while drawing global attention to the need for their broader engagement in strengthening primary health care.\(^3\)

World AIDS Day offers an important platform to highlight the role of communities at a time when reduced funding and a shrinking space for civil society are putting the sustainability of services and advocacy efforts in jeopardy. Greater mobilization of communities is urgently required to address the barriers that stop communities delivering services, including restrictions on registration and an absence of social contracting modalities.\(^3\)

The strong advocacy role played by communities is needed more than ever to ensure that AIDS remains on the political agenda that human rights are respected and that decision makers and implementers are held accountable.\(^3\)

Of the 37.9 million people living with HIV at the end of 2018, 79% received testing, 62% received treatment, and 53% had achieved suppression of the HIV with reduced risk of infecting others. Thousands of community health workers and members of the HIV and key population networks – many of whom are living with HIV or affected by the epidemic – contributed to this success.\(^3\)

Initiatives like the World AIDS Day involving various stakeholders will definitely play a key role in controlling a disease which has been an important cause of morbidity and mortality across the globe.

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