



FIRST LADY LEADS WEEK-LONG HIV/AIDS AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

The World Health Organization introduced the World AIDS Day in 1988 to create public awareness on the health challenges of the pandemic, which has become an annual event worldwide since then.

Beginning from 1988, the Day has been marked every December 1, when millions of people come together across the globe to commemorate the people who have lost their lives to HIV/AIDS.

The Day is also being used to appraise the progress made in response to the epidemic, and it provides the stakeholders the platform to recommit to ending further spread of the disease.

Since 2002 when the Ekiti State Action Committee on AIDS (SACA) was inaugurated till 2011 when it became a full-fledged agency, it has always joined the rest of the world to commemorate the Day.

For the first time in the history of the state, the commemoration of the 2011 World AIDS Day was a week-long event starting with a media chat addressed by the wife of Ekiti State Governor and the Chairperson of Ekiti State Agency for the Control of AIDS (EKSACA), Erelu Bisi Fayemi.

The weeklong event also included a rally at the Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti where the SACA chairperson led a number of dignitaries and stakeholders to sensitise the university community and create awareness on the use of condoms and other preventive measures.

The high point of the ceremony was when the entire machinery of state government led by the state governor, Dr Kayode Fayemi and his wife, Erelu Bisi Fayemi took to the streets of Ado-Ekiti in their efforts to create awareness and sensitise the people on the need to shun all activities that will infect them with HIV virus.

Governor Fayemi reiterated the commitment of his administration towards reducing the scourge of the virus in the state.





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He promised the necessary political will and financial support to ensure that those living with the virus are adequately taken care of to ensure that they don't end with opportunistic infections.

While kick-starting the weeklong event with press briefing, SACA Chairperson said that the theme of the 2011 World AIDS day is "Getting to Zero."

She added that the theme, which will be used until 2015, echoes the UNAIDS vision of achieving "Zero" new infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths.

The Chairperson disclosed that "A sense of Urgency" has been added as a sub-theme by Ekiti SACA to enable the state achieve the three zeros before the stated 2015 target.

Erelu Fayemi stressed that the global agenda is to give regions, countries, and constituencies the capacity to focus on one or all the three zeros that is most relevant to their context.

"I am of the strong belief, therefore, that the theme of this year's world AIDS day, 'Getting to Zero', is most appropriate. Here in Ekiti State, we not only want to get to zero, we need to do it urgently"

She affirmed that World AIDS Day is important in reminding the people that HIV has not gone away, and that there are many things still to be done.

Erelu Fayemi lamented that HIV is a threat to men, women and children on all continents around the world; with latest figures indicating that over 60 million people have become infected with HIV and nearly 30 million people have died of AIDS related cases.

At the Ekiti state University, the governor's wife said the aim of the rally was not to encourage promiscuity among the students but that it was important to sensitise them and ensure no more persons are infected by the virus again.

She said "World AIDS Day is a day when we all get together to think about the various approaches we all need to put in place to combat the AIDS virus and it is also the time for us to remember those amongst us who are living with the virus."

Erelu Fayemi reiterated the need for youths to abstain from sex before marriage and at least ensure their safety and those they come in contact with.



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She charged all sexually active individual to have HIV test since the virus could be contacted from variety of ways.

The SACA Chairperson who noted that testing positive is not the end of the world added that with appropriate care, they will live as many years as God ordained for the,

In her keynote speech to Ekiti people on World AIDS Day, Erelu Fayemi promised to work relentless to ensure adequate support and care for People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in the state.

Erelu Fayemi who appealed to government relevant agencies to enact and implement laws against stigmatization of People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) lamented the high rate of stigmatization in our society as PLWHA's find it difficult to secure jobs and even interact with other members of the society.

She stressed that there is urgent need for government to rise to the responsibility of protecting this vulnerable group of people, adding that the various structures government put in place will be harnessed against the challenges HIV/AIDS posed to the society adding that drugs as well as counselling would be provided for PLWHA's to make them comfortable and have a sense of belonging.

Erelu Fayemi explained that World AIDS day is all about raising money, increasing awareness, improving education and hopefully breakdown some of the unwarranted stigma that surround HIV.

Earlier in his welcome address, the Programme Manager of Ekiti SACA, Dr Charles Doherty said World AIDS Day is an opportunity to take stock of the past and present while still projecting into the future with a view to critically examine the areas of strengths and weaknesses through experience sharing.

Dr Doherty explained that the reason for the day was to impress upon humanity the reality of HIV scourge through public awareness creation with particular reference to the death caused by AIDS.

Goodwill messages were delivered by the various Non-Governmental Organizations including National Council of Women Societies (NCWS) among others, Local Action Committee on AIDS (LACA), Ekiti State House of Assembly Committee on SACA and Network of Persons living with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria (NEPWHAN) among others.



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