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Opinion Editorial

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**World AIDS Day Op-Ed
by
Ambassador Teddy B. Taylor**

Papua New Guinea and America Building on Success in Fighting AIDS



Teddy B. Taylor, United States Ambassador to Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu

World AIDS Day is both a day of remembrance and a day of celebration. We must all remember those who have lost their lives to AIDS. It's in their honor that we work each and every day to provide HIV prevention, treatment and care to millions across the globe.

Yet, it's also a day to celebrate those whose lives have been improved and saved in Papua New Guinea and throughout the world, thanks to global efforts to fight this devastating disease. On this World AIDS Day, it is important to remember that we have a shared responsibility to build on the success achieved to date by making smart investments that will ultimately save more lives.

And there is much success to build on. The United States through the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) supported activities under a comprehensive

prevention model focused on reducing HIV prevalence in at-risk groups and preventing the further spread of HIV in the general population. This approach complements the work of most other donors who support activities targeted more at the general population. This year in Papua New Guinea, the PEPFAR program directly supported over 6,000 people with HIV prevention interventions. Over 1,100 people received HIV counseling and testing and care and support programs that included TB outreach was provided to over 250 people.

U.S. support continues to grow, despite difficult economic times. Building on the success of PEPFAR and other global health programs, President Barack Obama has also put forward an ambitious Global Health Initiative, which will support coordinated programs aimed at reducing lives lost from HIV/AIDS and other health challenges. And through U.S. investments in the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, many more people will benefit from prevention, care and treatment.

Working with Papua New Guinea, we are also becoming smarter about how we're making investments with the goal of saving more lives. Experience in Papua New Guinea and elsewhere has taught us how to use every Kina invested in battling HIV/AIDS more effectively and efficiently. This means every Kina is going a little further, allowing us to do more to combat HIV/AIDS, and address issues across the global health spectrum. It also means that we can now measure our success not just in Kina invested, but in the ultimate measure of success – lives improved and saved.

We are using our money wisely for greater impact. The United States Government's HIV programming in Papua New Guinea has focused on achieving sustainability by strengthening existing systems and structures; and most importantly, investing in building local capacity and increasing knowledge, understanding and ownership of the program to sustain interventions. We continue to direct our focus on institutional capacity building in Papua New Guinea for local HIV/AIDS partners such as Provincial AIDS Committees. Capacity building activities increased markedly to cover our existing number of local partners, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria sites, and other organizations through trainings on outreach, peer education, HIV counseling and testing, and management of sexually transmitted infections for female sex workers, men who have sex with men, and injecting drug users as well as community and home-based care for people living with HIV in Port Moresby and Madang.

On this World AIDS Day, we honor the lives lost and celebrate the lives saved, but we cannot rest. Working together, we must remain dedicated to building on success by making smart investments to save even more lives.

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