

# Candlelight Memorial Day: Let's keep the light on HIV



Candlelight Memorial Day is on the 18th of May 2014, with the theme: 'Let's keep the light on HIV'. This year, the aim is to recognise and appreciate the major advances in HIV & AIDS research which have greatly increased life expectancy. This day is also to remember those whom we have lost over the years.

One of the goals of Candlelight Memorial Day is to raise awareness of HIV & AIDS and to break down the stigma associated with it. Finally, the theme encompasses the increasing need to keep HIV & AIDS on the global agenda for international policy makers.

## Advances in HIV & AIDS treatment

The World Health Organisation (WHO) says that HIV & AIDS remains one of the most significant challenges to public health in the world. However, advances in the treatment of HIV & AIDS means that people living with the virus are now living longer and healthier. Furthermore, the roll-out of antiretroviral therapy across the world has improved significantly.

Progress is rapidly being made in testing for the drug-resistant strain of the virus but treatment protocols for drug-resistant HIV still need to be adequately developed. Importantly, WHO reports that mother-to-child transmission of the virus is almost completely avoidable.

## Future thinking

Although great advancements have been made, more progress is still needed. In 2012, WHO reported that 1.6 million people died of HIV & AIDS.

More work is still needed by grassroots HIV & AIDS activist groups to further reduce the stigma of HIV & AIDS. It is also necessary to encourage people to test regularly for HIV & AIDS. With voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) programmes increasingly accessible, more and more people not only have access to the information they need to prevent HIV & AIDS but also to access treatment.

## Do your part

This Candlelight Memorial Day, do your part in keeping the light on HIV & AIDS by going for VCT and encouraging your loved ones to do the same. You can also light a candle for those who have been affected by the pandemic. We can still achieve a generation that is infection-free in our lifetime. Let's keep the light on HIV.