



Kiribati promotes voluntary HIV Testing, Young people vulnerable to infection

By Online Editor

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Kiribati does not currently have a high HIV prevalence, but it did have several high-risk groups carrying other sexually transmitted diseases, which suggested that AIDS could easily spread, according to Kiribati Vice President Teima Onorio.

Onorio made the comment while addressing the High Level Meeting on AIDS currently underway in New York.

“Kiribati’s predominantly young population would be especially vulnerable,” she stressed. In response, the Government had increased the number of voluntary confidential counselling and testing sites, with hours to accommodate specific groups like transactional sex workers, seafarers, policemen and antenatal mothers.

A new clinic funded by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) had opened in 2010, and focused on fathers and their role in preventing the transfer of HIV to children.

“While the number of those infected with the virus remained small — just 54 confirmed cases — stigma and discrimination remained the major obstacles to proper care and the prevention of further infection,” she said, emphasizing that the Government was working steadily to transform community perceptions.

The Kiribati Government was also supporting trainees for the human rights and workplace policy to work with the Pacific Islands AIDS Foundation, local lawyers and the Regional Rights Resource Team focal person to review and enforce current legislation for those living with HIV and other vulnerable and marginalized groups.

The creation of a bill would be used to consult with community members and should help improve perceptions of affected individuals.

SOURCE: UNAIDS/PACNEWS