

The Virgin Islands Consortium

576 People Living With HIV In VI, 446 Have Died Of AIDS In The Territory

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As World AIDS day is being commemorated around the globe lead by the United Nations, Governor John P. de Jongh, pursuant to the Revised Organic Act of 1954, has declared December 1 as World AIDS day in the territory in order to strengthen the worldwide effort to stop the spread of the disease.

This year's theme is "Focus, Partner, Achieve: An AIDS-free Generation."

According to a release issued by Government House, 134 people were diagnosed with HIV in 2008. As of late 2012, 576 people were living with HIV in the Virgin Islands, and AIDS has claimed 446 lives in the territory since the epidemic struck the

territory. Furthermore, only 30 percent of the HIV population in the Virgin Islands received care in 2012, and 19 percent of the HIV population in the territory achieved viral suppression--where the level of circulating virus in the blood remains low or undetectable.

"I urge all citizens to take part in activities and observances designed to increase awareness and understanding of HIV/AIDS in our community and as a global challenge, to take part in HIV/AIDS prevention and programs throughout the Territory, and join the global effort to prevent the further spread of HIV/AIDS," de Jongh said.

In the release, the role of the Virgin Islands Department of Health as it relates to HIV/AIDS is described as fostering efforts to "increase awareness of how HIV is spread." It said the Government of the Virgin Islands, as well as key policymakers, "should make every effort to meet the targets they have agreed to in the fight against HIV an AIDS."

Read the Governor's full proclamation [here](#).