

Cambodia village reports mass HIV/AIDS infection

December 16 2014

Cambodian health authorities on Tuesday said more than 80 people—including children and the elderly—who tested positive for HIV/AIDS in a single remote village may have been infected by contaminated needles.

Hundreds of panicked residents of the village in Battambang province in the country's west have flocked to a health centre for testing since news of the mass [infection](#) emerged last week, with a total of 82 having been confirmed as being infected.

"Of 556 people tested, 72 of them came back positive for HIV/AIDS," Teng Kunthy, Secretary General of the National AIDS Authority, told AFP, adding that 14 of the people infected were children.

"This is a higher rate than usual... It may be caused by the use of the same tools such as needles," he said.

"This is our preliminary conclusion... we are working to collect more evidence."

A further 10 people were found to be infected with the virus on Tuesday when more villagers arrived at the [health](#) centre, also in Battambang province, Hei Sik, a local HIV/AIDS program director, told AFP by telephone.

"According to villagers, they suspected the infection may have been

caused by injections from private local medics," he said.

"This is a surprisingly high rate, the highest that I have ever seen. Some of them are women aged in their 70s and 80s," Hei Sik added.

Cambodia has been widely hailed for its efforts in tackling HIV/AIDS.

The National AIDS Authority says the rate of HIV infection among people aged 15 to 49 has declined from 0.6 percent in 2013 to 0.4 percent in 2014.

Currently, Cambodia estimates more than 73,000 people live with the disease.

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