

Cambodia probes new village HIV outbreak

February 22 2016

Cambodia health officials on Monday were screening hundreds of villagers for HIV after 14 locals tested positive for the virus, sparking fears of a fresh outbreak.

Nervous villagers from Peam, an hour north of the capital Phnom Penh, have flocked to a house where a team of health officials were taking [blood samples](#).

Ly Peng Sun, the director of the National Centre for HIV, said moves to test the entire village were made after 14 people screened positive earlier this month.

"More than 140 people have come for testing (today) and the results so far show around 50 people are HIV-negative," he added.

HIV rates are high in impoverished Cambodia but the country has made significant gains against the virus in recent years.

However fears are running high after a recent [outbreak](#) in another village left more than 200 infected.

That outbreak was traced to an unlicensed doctor reusing dirty needles who has since been jailed.

Some of those testing positive in Peam believe they may have been infected by a doctor, locals said.

"The villagers are nervous now. They suspect the doctor might have spread HIV," Phy Sobin, 33, told AFP by telephone after she tested negative.

"I used to get many injections from the doctor. I and my two kids tested negative for HIV, but my husband has not tested yet," she said, adding that her 67-year old aunt had been confirmed HIV-positive.

However Ly Peng Sun said it was too early to say what caused the latest outbreak.

The doctor at the centre of the previous outbreak in the western province of Battambang was jailed for 25 years, partly because some of his patients died after being infected.

The case shone a spotlight on the chronically underfunded healthcare system in the impoverished nation.

World Bank figures say Cambodia, one of Asia's poorest nations, has just 0.2 [doctors](#) for every 100,000 people, on a par with Afghanistan.

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