

Medical aid group urges better HIV treatment in West Africa

June 7 2016, by Carley Petesch

Governments need to improve access to HIV treatment in West and Central Africa, where critical medicines reach less than one-third of those in need, Doctors Without Borders said Tuesday.

The call by the group, also known as Medecins Sans Frontieres, came a day before a United Nations high-level meeting on ending AIDS.

The group praised a global goal to curb the HIV epidemic by 2020 by providing life-saving treatment to 30 million people, but said countries in regions with a lower prevalence of HIV are being overlooked.

"U.N. member states need to use this opportunity to recommit to people living with HIV in regions of the world that have been essentially neglected despite the tremendous advances in the last decade globally," said Dr. Cecilia Ferreyra, the group's HIV medical adviser. "While the number of people on life-saving HIV treatment worldwide doubled over the last five years to nearly 17 million people, those living in West and Central Africa are missing out and in desperate need of treatment."

The report said 4.5 million of the 6.5 million people living with HIV in West and Central Africa don't get treatment.

The goal should be to triple the number of people who start [antiretroviral therapy](#) in the next three years, the group said.

U.N. member states must donate to help such regions implement catch-

up plans to increase access to treatment, it said.

Challenges in West and Central Africa include service failures, the lack of trained health staff, stigma and [treatment](#) fees, the group said.

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