

Ex-Miss Universe urges HIV testing in Philippines

August 9 2017

The Philippines' former Miss Universe conducted a public HIV test in Manila on Wednesday a week after the United Nations said her country had the fastest-growing number of infections in Asia.

Pia Wurtzbach, UNAIDS goodwill ambassador for Asia and the Pacific, took the [test](#) in front of reporters as part of her efforts to raise awareness of HIV and remove the stigma surrounding the virus in the conservative [nation](#).

The United Nations and the government said last week the Philippines saw a 140 percent increase in new cases from 2010 to 2016, bucking a regional trend that saw infections decline by 13 percent over the same period.

"It is very tricky in the Philippines because we're a predominantly Catholic country and we are conservative. That's why it can be quite a challenge to spread awareness on this issue," Wurtzbach said.

"This is a problem that's really happening right now and if we don't do anything about it, we're gonna be number one in the world."

The nation of 100 million people, of whom 80 percent are Catholic, is heavily influenced by the church which frowns on contraceptive use. Testing for HIV is also considered taboo.

Wurtzbach has been campaigning for HIV awareness since winning the

2015 beauty pageant. She secured the crown following a major blunder in which host Steve Harvey initially gave it to Miss Colombia in error.

On Wednesday Wurtzbach launched an HIV information campaign for young people as she expressed support for proposed laws which would allow 15-year-olds to get an HIV test without parental consent. The minimum age is now 18.

The health department had said most reported HIV cases were among men having sex with men. This group on average started having sex at 16 before they had begun using condoms or taken tests, increasing the risk of infection.

"We hope to see an increase in the rates of regular HIV testing among Filipinos to normalise the procedure as a regular medical exam," Wurtzbach said.

© 2017 AFP

Citation: Ex-Miss Universe urges HIV testing in Philippines (2017, August 9) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-08-ex-miss-universe-urges-hiv-philippines.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.