World Hepatitis Day is commemorated on 28 July 2016. The theme chosen for this year is “elimination”.

This day gives us an opportunity to step up national and international efforts on hepatitis and urge partners and Member States to support the roll-out of the first Global Health Sector Strategy on viral hepatitis for 2016–2021, which was approved during the Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly in May 2016.

The new strategy introduces the first-ever global targets for viral hepatitis. These include a 30% reduction in new cases of hepatitis B and C, and a 10% reduction in mortality by 2020.

Key approaches will be to expand vaccination programmes for hepatitis B; focus on preventing mother-to-child transmission of hepatitis B; improve injection, blood and surgical safety; “harm reduction” services for people who inject drugs; and increase access to diagnosis and treatment for hepatitis B and C.

On World Hepatitis Day, 28 July 2016, WHO calls on policy-makers, health workers and the public to "Know hepatitis - Act now".
The Organization urges them to inform themselves about the infection, take positive action to know their status by getting tested, and finally seek treatment to reduce needless deaths from this preventable and treatable infection.

Viral hepatitis infection is widely spread, affecting 400 million people worldwide – over 10 times the number of people infected with HIV. Globally, about 1.4 million people die each year from hepatitis. It is estimated that only 5% of people with chronic hepatitis know of their infection, and less than 1% have access to treatment.

Hepatitis B and C infections are transmitted through contaminated blood as well as through contaminated needles and syringes in healthcare setting and among people who inject drugs. The viruses can also be transmitted through unsafe sex and from an infected mother to her newborn child.

In Seychelles since the first case of Hepatitis C was reported, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of cases recorded each year. Most of the cases reported are among Intravenous Drug Users. The Seychelles Government remains committed towards control and prevention of Hepatitis’s.

Since 1995 Immunization against Hepatitis B forms part of the EPI programme. The vaccines are also provided to Health Care workers, first responders, HIV positive persons and IDUs.
The government provides methadone substitution to IDUS free of charge. The needle syringe exchange programme has been initiated. The government is planning to treat Persons infected with Hepatitis C, as cure can be achieved. The first patients have already been started on treatment.

The government has also invested considerably towards improving injection, blood and surgical safety.

Despite our efforts, more needs to be done to remain abreast with the evolving epidemic.

The ministry of health cannot tackle this alone. National support is needed in order to implement some solid steps towards control of viral hepatitis. We need to increase public awareness about the risk factors, remove social stigma and promote early testing. It is critical that those who could be at risk continue to be tested as it’s a disease which can go undetected for years. Those who are receiving treatment must complete their cure.

For our health professionals, we need to relook at our capacity building, plans to ensure effective implementation of treatment care, support and prevention strategies of viral hepatitis and Implementation of new training methods.

With more people being tested for Hepatitis C and accessing prevention, treatment, care and support we can reach the global target and hopefully beyond.
We urge you all to

**Know hepatitis- Know your risk, Get Tested and Access Treatment**