UNAIDS Asks China to Assist HIV-Infected Blood Donors

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Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) director Peter Piot said September 18 that China should compensate the thousands of people infected with HIV through government-supported blood trading and be given access to top-of-the-line anti-AIDS drugs, reports Agence France-Presse.

Up to 40,000 people living with HIV in China live in Henan, one of the nation's hardest hit provinces. Many contracted the virus from unsanitary blood drives that had been approved by local governments.

According to UNAIDS, China has about 700,000 positive people and an estimated 50,000 new infections in 2007. "People are still dying because they cannot have access to what we call second- and third-line drugs," Piot said. "In AIDS treatment, people are treated with first-line drugs, but gradually the virus develops resistance to these drugs so they need what we call second line, these are more expensive drugs, newer drugs."

Piot will meet on September 26 with Vice Premier Li Keqiang, who is in charge of China's HIV/AIDS program.

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