

▣ HIV/AIDS in South Africa – the status in 2010

Two thirds of all people infected with HIV worldwide, live in sub-Saharan Africa. With a prevalence of about 5.5 million, South Africa represents a quarter of the burden of HIV infection in that area. This effectively makes South Africa the epicentre of the epidemic.

Aspects of particular concern

One of the groups worst affected in terms of HIV prevalence, is that of women, particularly **young women** between the ages of 19 and 35. 55% of HIV infected adults in Africa are women while the prevalence of the disease has risen to a staggering 29% amongst **pregnant women** in South Africa. The fact that this figure was 0.9% in 1990, is evidence of the speed and voracity with which the epidemic has taken hold. It is estimated that of the 1900 children who become infected daily in Africa, 95% of these acquire the infection from their mother (**mother to child transmission**).

Another aspect that is of grave concern is the 73% rate of **co-infection between HIV and TB**. In his speech at the recent World AIDS Conference, The Minister of Health in South Africa stated that between 1997 and 2005, the number of people dying from TB each year rose by 334.8%. Of the estimated 5.5 million people in South Africa infected with HIV, one third will develop TB during their lifetime.

What plans are in place?

In 2007, the South African Government announced a 5 year National Strategic Plan (NSP) for HIV/AIDS and STIs. Most notably, they are aiming at reducing the rate of HIV infection by 50% by 2011 and ensuring that 80% of people requiring treatment, are able to gain access to appropriate antiretroviral drugs.

One of the measures they have put in place in order to achieve the goals mentioned above, is the implementation of a National HIV Counselling and Testing Campaign. On 25 April 2010, the National Department of Health launched this campaign and it will run until June 2011.

In brief, the objectives of the campaign are as follows:

- to mobilise 15 million South Africans to know their HIV status
- to support people with key prevention message of taking proactive steps to a healthy lifestyle irrespective of HIV status
- to increase incidence of health seeking behaviour
- to increase the access to treatment, care and support.

Government has called on the Private Sector to support this initiative and participate in any way they can. As the country's largest provider of HIV/AIDS disease management, Aid for AIDS takes this call for support very seriously. We are committed to promoting HIV Counselling and Testing amongst all our clients and their members and employees.

Furthermore we have put in place certain rigorous measures that will ensure the maximum number of individuals coming forward for testing in pharmacies around the country, will be enrolled onto an appropriate disease management programme.

We welcome the opportunity to be part of this historical and critical endeavour by Government to make all South Africans aware of the need to know their HIV status, and to seek out care treatment if appropriate.