

EVIDENCE FOR HIV DECLINE IN ZIMBABWE

UNAIDS releases comprehensive review of epidemiological data

Abuja, 7 December 2005 – A comprehensive review of epidemiological and behavioural data released today by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) concludes that HIV prevalence¹ has fallen in Zimbabwe over the past five years, and that HIV incidence² has also declined.

The review, entitled ‘Evidence for HIV decline in Zimbabwe’, affirms that changes in sexual behaviour—such as increased condom use and reduction of sexual partners—has accelerated declines beyond what would have been expected given the natural dynamics of HIV epidemics.

A review team³ assessed a wide variety of data to ascertain whether reports of downward trends in HIV rates were accurate. The review draws together all known data on trends in HIV and associated behaviours in Zimbabwe—including recent data that showed a decline in prevalence among pregnant women from 26% in 2002 to 21% in 2004.

UNAIDS sees the evidence of decline as encouraging, but underlines that the challenge now is to ensure that the downward trend in Zimbabwe is sustained. UNAIDS also stresses that this evidence of declining rates is no reason for complacency. HIV prevalence rates in Zimbabwe are still among the highest in the world with one in five adults living with HIV.

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¹ Percentage of adult population (aged 15-49) living with HIV

² Number of new HIV infections

³ Including researchers from Imperial College London, UK