

Sub-Saharan Africa

Overview

- Almost two thirds (63%) of all people living with HIV globally live in sub-Saharan Africa—an estimated 24.7 million in 2006.
- Some 2.8 million adults and children became infected with HIV in 2006, more than in all other regions of the world combined.
- The 2.1 million AIDS-related deaths in sub-Saharan Africa represent 72% of global AIDS deaths.
- Africa's HIV epidemics are following divergent trends. There is evidence of diminishing or stable HIV spread in most east African and west African countries, along with signs of growing epidemics in a few countries. In southern Africa, only **Zimbabwe** presents evidence of a strong decline in national HIV prevalence. In several other countries—including **South Africa**—the epidemics do not yet show signs of abating.
- Across this region, women bear a disproportionate part of the AIDS burden: not only are they more likely than men to be infected with HIV, but in most countries they are also more likely to be the ones caring for people living with HIV.
- Provision of antiretroviral therapy has expanded dramatically in sub-Saharan Africa: more than one million people were receiving antiretroviral treatment by June 2006, a ten-fold increase since December 2003.
- Treatment scale-up efforts have been especially strong of late in some countries, including **Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia**. However, the sheer scale of need in this region means that a little less than one quarter (23%) of the estimated 4.6 million people in need of antiretroviral therapy in this region are receiving it.

Country developments

- Southern Africa remains the epicentre of the global HIV epidemic: 32% of people living with HIV globally live in this sub-region and 34% of AIDS deaths globally occur there.
- The only evidence of declining national adult HIV prevalence in southern Africa comes from **Zimbabwe**, where both HIV prevalence and incidence has fallen. This appears to be related to a combination of factors, especially reductions in 'casual' sex liaisons, along with increases in condom use and later sexual debuts. A combination of increased AIDS awareness, relatively extensive health infrastructure and growing anxiety about AIDS mortality appears to have prompted such behaviour changes. In addition, high mortality rates have contributed considerably to the decline in HIV prevalence.
- In **South Africa**, some 5.5 million people, including 240 000 children younger than 15 years, were living with HIV in 2005.
- The outbreak of extensively drug resistant tuberculosis in KwaZulu-Natal detected in early September has highlighted the lethal combination of HIV and TB in **South Africa**, where an estimated 60% of TB patients overall are also infected with HIV.

- **Swaziland** now has the highest adult HIV prevalence in the world: 33.4%.
- National adult HIV infection levels are high also in **Botswana, Lesotho** and **Namibia** (between 20-24%).
- The island nations off the southern African coast are experiencing much smaller epidemics. National adult HIV prevalence in **Madagascar** was well under 1% in 2005. However, knowledge of HIV is poor and condom use is highly infrequent.
- In **East Africa**, the general trends of stabilizing or declining HIV prevalence appear to be continuing.
- Having diminished during the 1990s, **Uganda's** epidemic appears to have stabilized overall. National adult HIV prevalence was 6.7% in 2005 but it was significantly higher among women (nearly 8%) than among men (5%). However, in some rural areas there is now evidence of an increase in HIV infection. A study carried out in 25 villages showed that prevalence had risen from 5.6% in men and 6.9% in women in 2000, to 6.5% in men and 8.8% in women in 2004.
- Adult HIV prevalence continues to be much lower in **West Africa** than in other parts of sub-Saharan Africa. National adult HIV prevalence surpasses 4% only in **Côte d'Ivoire**, and is 2% or lower in several other countries, especially those of the Sahel.
- As in most of **East Africa**, HIV infection trends are generally stable although declining prevalence has been noted among pregnant women in several cities, including Ouagadougou (**Burkina Faso**), Abidjan (**Côte d'Ivoire**) and Lomé (**Togo**).
- National adult HIV prevalence remains just under 1% in **Senegal**. Sex work appears still to be the main factor driving Senegal's epidemic, with HIV prevalence as high as 30% among sex workers in Ziguinchor, for example.
- **Guinea** is experiencing one of the smaller AIDS epidemics in sub-Saharan Africa. Adult HIV prevalence was an estimated 1.5% in 2005 and approximately 85 000 people were living with HIV. A recent national household survey showed that HIV infection levels are highest in urban areas, where they exceeded 2% among adults in the capital, Conakry.

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