

CHILDREN AND AIDS: A STOCKTAKING
FACT SHEET #3

PREVENT INFECTION AMONG ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE:

Unite for Children, Unite against AIDS target: By 2010, reduce the percentage of young people living with HIV by 25 per cent globally.

More than 10 million young people between 15 and 24 are infected with HIV, with the highest prevalence rates in sub-Saharan Africa.

In these high-prevalence countries, young women are more likely to be HIV-infected. For example, in Côte d'Ivoire and Kenya, for every infected young man there are five infected young women. Corresponding ratios are one to four in Uganda and one to three in Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Knowledge of HIV prevention is particularly low among young women in sub-Saharan Africa, where on average only 23 per cent of women aged 15 to 24 know how to protect themselves against infection, compared to the 31 per cent average for young men. In Benin, Chad and Mali, for example, less than 10 per cent of young women know how to protect themselves from HIV infection.

Comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS and how it is spread remains low in high-prevalence countries. For example:

- In sub-Saharan Africa, fewer than one in three young people have accurate knowledge about AIDS and how to protect themselves from the virus;
- Rwanda is the only country in sub-Saharan Africa where more than half of young people aged 15 to 24 have accurate information about HIV and how to protect themselves. Rwanda is the first country to hold annual national reviews on children and AIDS;
- Other sub-Saharan countries where young people demonstrate the greatest knowledge of HIV prevention include Tanzania, Kenya and Ghana, where 49, 47 and 44 per cent of young men and 44, 34 and 38 per cent of young women, respectively, are adequately informed.

A survey of more than 70 countries shows that some countries are placing increased emphasis on prevention. For example:

- Those benefiting from testing and counselling services jumped from around four million in 2001 to 16.5 million in 2005;
- In 58 of the surveyed countries, AIDS education was provided in 74 per cent of primary schools and 81 per cent of secondary schools.

New evidence suggests that declining HIV prevalence in Kenya and parts of Côte d'Ivoire, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Botswana are the result of safer sexual behaviour among young people.