

# Progress towards Universal Access South Africa

**Universal access implies that all people should be able to have access to information and services that are:**

*Equitable – accessible – affordable – comprehensive – sustainable*

In 2006, countries worldwide committed to setting ambitious national targets for scaling up towards Universal Access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010. The targets focus on what could be achieved if the following obstacles can be addressed:

- **Predictable and sustainable financing**
- **Strengthening human resources and health systems**
- **Access to affordable commodities**
- **Stigma, discrimination, gender and human rights**

Review of National reports in 2008 demonstrated that Universal Access has catalyzed an accelerated and strengthened national HIV response with more results-based planning and a general overall increase in access to services. National political leadership and coordination were found to be critical to scale up. However more emphasis was needed on addressing the obstacles to scale up which would not support reaching universal access but also the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Specifically, there is a need to accelerate progress on HIV-prevention efforts, and to better utilise the resources available within civil society and people living with HIV.

Universal access has generated a continuing engagement with national partners to monitor and review progress towards universal access. This has resulted in a number of countries revising their national targets to ensure a sharper focus on areas in need of additional support.

## Progress in South Africa

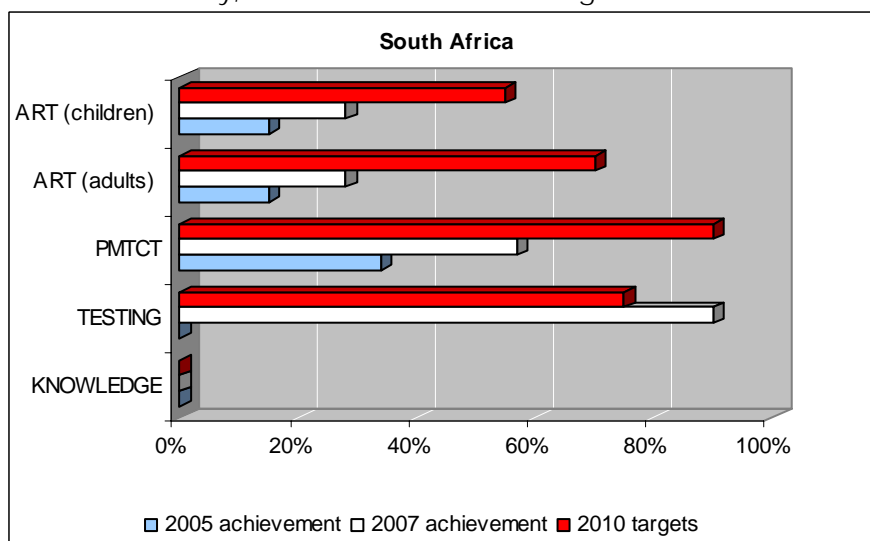
Universal access has contributed positively to the national response, with the setting of targets helping to galvanize the different stakeholders and fostering a consultative participatory process, (target setting, drafting and costing), resulting in the ownership of National Strategic Plan. However, major challenges remain around limited implementation capacity to fully operationalize the Strategic Plan.

While it is too early to assess the true impact of scale up, program reports already show signs of progress, with one of the largest treatment coverage programmes in the world now reaching half a million people, and prevention of mother to child transmission services available to over 50% of those in need. South Africa has recognized skilled human resource capacity as a major impediment towards rapid scale up of intervention programmes, particularly in the Provinces. This is a major challenge since human resource capacity - particularly in specialized fields of the health sector - cannot be developed overnight. Other challenges include low uptake of prevention and weak service delivery structures more especially at lower levels. Conversely, South Africa has made great strides in addressing the issue of sustainable financing,

ranking second in the world in terms of domestic spending on AIDS

**Figure 1.** The graph presents a snapshot of progress towards universal access based on 2005 and 2007 reported UNGASS achievements and 2010 reported targets, as per data available.

Please note that ARV and PMTCT targets may be subject to change based on revised numbers in need of ART.



*"(We) commit ourselves to pursuing all necessary efforts to scale up nationally driven, sustainable and comprehensive responses... towards the goal of universal access to comprehensive prevention programmes, treatment, care and support by 2010."*

2006 Political Declaration, (UN General Assembly, 15 June 2006)