Join the fight against AIDS in Jamaica

MENU OF PARTNERSHIP OPTIONS
Beyond the sunshine and sandy beaches…

Jamaica’s HIV/AIDS epidemic is hidden behind the image of an island paradise.

More than 6000 AIDS cases have been reported. It’s believed the actual number of infected people is three or four times greater, with many individuals unaware of their serostatus.

After sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean region has the second-highest incidence of AIDS in the world.

Because of delayed diagnosis and the lack of treatment and care, the AIDS mortality rate is an alarming 61%.

HIV/AIDS affects the most economically productive segment of the Jamaican population. It’s the leading cause of death in men and women between 30 and 34 years, and the second-leading cause of death in children under five.

HIV/AIDS rates have reached 10–25% among high-risk groups, such as sex workers, prisoners and men who have sex with men (MSM).

Time to act. Time to care. The evidence shows clearly advance achieved in Jamaica in public health and development.

The face of AIDS…

There are currently more men infected with HIV in Jamaica than women. Women cannot afford to be complacent, though, as the number of HIV-positive women is rapidly rising.

Young women are infected in ever-growing numbers, with infection rates increasing by an estimated 40% each year since 1999. Young people, aged 15–19, have the highest HIV rates of 2.5%, followed by 25–29-year-olds with 2%.

Discrimination and stigma, multiple sexual partners, early sexual initiation and inconsistent condom use fuel the epidemic.

Stigma and discrimination are evident in the workplace, among health workers and in society at large. Stigma threatens to undermine all prevention and care efforts.

A crucial time…

Jamaica is at a turning point. With a prevalence rate of 1.5%, global experts say if efforts aren’t expanded to effectively manage the epidemic, it could spread to crisis levels.

Jamaica has been engaged in the struggle against HIV/AIDS since 1988. As part of its expanded response to the epidemic, the country is implementing its fourth National Strategic Plan.

To increase its capacity to deliver effective HIV/AIDS health care, as well as training for health workers, the Jamaican Government took out a US$15 million loan from the World Bank. This adds to Jamaica’s debt, however, which is already more than 1½ times what the country spends on health and education combined.
Jamaica currently spends 6.4% of its Gross National Product (GNP) on health. This cost is projected to increase by at least 35.4% by 2005, due to the AIDS epidemic.

HIV/AIDS-prevention programmes are being conducted throughout Jamaica, but a significant increase in investment is necessary to bring the epidemic under control. This small island nation can't handle this crisis on its own.

### Planning ahead…

The National Strategic Plan is being implemented under the guidance of the National HIV/AIDS Control Programme, with participation from the Government, nongovernmental organizations and the National Planning Council.

There are high levels of commitment from the Jamaican Government, which is collaborating with the United Nations, as well as other national and international organizations with regard to prevention and care.

_Strongly that HIV/AIDS threatens and undermines every development._ John Junor, Minister of Health, Jamaica

The Jamaica Employers’ Federation (JEF)—the International Labour Organization’s employer representative in Jamaica—has, on behalf of the country’s employers, adopted its own Platform for Action on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work.

Private-sector groups, such as The Private Sector Organization of Jamaica (PSOJ), are also fighting the spread of AIDS, as well as the stigma and discrimination associated with it.

Jamaica is also a key player in launching the Caribbean Business Council on HIV/AIDS, an effort of the Pan-Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS (coordinated by CARICOM) to engage local businesses in responding to the epidemic, including the fight against stigma and discrimination in the workplace.

### Taking heart…

Strong prevention programmes are under way to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The Ministry of Health and the National AIDS Committee are spearheading the Government’s efforts to address the epidemic, which include coordinating and supporting community involvement.

Parish AIDS Committees are community-based organizations that carry out local HIV/AIDS programmes with assistance from nongovernmental, national and international organizations. With additional resources, more can be done to prevent the further spread of the epidemic.

### Basic country statistics:

- Population (2002): 2.6 million
- HIV prevalence (15–49 years) (2002): 1.5%
- GNP per capita (2001): US$2600
- Life expectancy at birth (2000): 71.2 years
Where are the gaps?

Prevention campaigns, especially among vulnerable groups, must be refined, scaled up and sustained.

Efforts to systematically raise HIV/AIDS awareness and reduce the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS are necessary at the community level.

Voluntary counselling and testing, structured treatments and referral systems for people living with HIV/AIDS must be expanded.

HIV/AIDS policy, legal protections and advocacy efforts need to be further developed. People living with HIV/AIDS must also become more involved in the planning and implementation of these activities.

Your next step…

To find out exactly how you can make a difference in Jamaica, contact:

Dr Peter Figueroa, Chief, Epidemiology, Ministry of Health, figueroa@moh.gov.jm

Ms Laila Ismail-Khan, Chairperson, United Nations Theme Group on HIV/AIDS, lismailkhan@unicef.org

Jacqueline D. Coke-Lloyd, Executive Director, Jamaica Employers’ Federation, jef@cwjamaica.com

To find out more about how Jamaica is fighting HIV/AIDS, consult these useful publications:


Visit [www.jamaicanap.org](http://www.jamaicanap.org) and [www.nacjamaica.com](http://www.nacjamaica.com) for the latest updates and information.


As the leading advocate for worldwide action against HIV/AIDS, the global mission of UNAIDS is to lead, strengthen and support an expanded response to the epidemic that will:

➤ prevent the spread of HIV;
➤ provide care and support for those infected and affected by the disease;
➤ reduce the vulnerability of individuals and communities to HIV/AIDS; and
➤ alleviate the socioeconomic and human impact of the epidemic.