

Report on the global

HIV/AIDS

epidemic



2002



Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

UNAIDS

UNICEF • UNDP • UNFPA • UNDCP
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UNAIDS - 20 avenue Appia - 1211 Geneva 27 - Switzerland
Telephone: (+41 22) 791 36 66 - Fax: (+41 22) 791 41 87
E-mail: unaids@unaids.org - Internet: <http://www.unaids.org>

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Contents

	Acknowledgements	5
	Preface	6
	Global estimates of the HIV/AIDS epidemic as of end 2001	8
1	Fighting AIDS: a new global resolve	9
2	A global overview of the epidemic	21
3	The mounting impact	43
	Focus: AIDS and human rights	62
	Focus: AIDS and young people	70
4	Prevention: applying the lessons learned	79
	Focus: AIDS and the world of work	108
	Focus: AIDS and mobile populations	114
5	Where prevention and care meet: voluntary counselling and testing, and preventing mother-to-child transmission	121
	Focus: AIDS and orphans	133
6	Care, treatment and support for people living with HIV/AIDS	141
7	Meeting the need	161
8	National responses: turning commitment into action	173
	Table of country-specific HIV/AIDS estimates and data, as of end 2001	189
	Annex 1: HIV/AIDS estimates and data, end 2001	203
	Annex 2: Key to Table 1	207
	Selected bibliography	208

Figures

Page	Fig.	
23	1	HIV prevalence among pregnant women in Kampala, Uganda: 1991–2000
24	2	HIV prevalence rates among pregnant women attending antenatal clinics in urban sites in Cameroon, 1989–2000
27	3	Condom use among men with non-regular partners in selected sub-Saharan African countries: 1994–2000
29	4	HIV prevalence among sex workers in selected provinces in China: 1993–2000
33	5	Cumulative reported HIV infections per million population in Eastern European countries: 1993–2001
36	6	HIV prevalence among pregnant women in Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic: 1991–2000
40	7	HIV incidence among men who have sex with men in Vancouver, Madrid and San Francisco: 1995–2000
45	8	Changes in life expectancy in selected African countries with high and low HIV prevalence: 1950–2005
45	9	Reduction in life expectancy compared to the 'no AIDS' scenario, in selected countries: 2000–2005
46	10	Estimated and projected deaths at ages 15–34, with and without AIDS, in South Africa: 1980–2025
52	11	Projected reduction in size of primary-school-age population by 2010, in selected African countries
54	12	Percentage of workforce lost to AIDS by 2005 and 2020 in selected African countries
55	13	The impact of HIV/AIDS on industries: an overview
68	14	Proportion of young women who have heard of AIDS and have at least one negative attitude towards people living with AIDS
71	15	Percentage of young men and women (15–19) who had sex before their 15 th birthday: 1998–2001
72	16	Percentage of sexually experienced girls in South Africa who say...
73	17	Percentage of men who used a condom with a recent non-regular partner, by level of formal education: 1995–2000
82	18	Scenario of the epidemic in Thailand, had there been no intervention through 2020, and observed epidemic curve
85	19	HIV prevalence among injecting drug users in Kathmandu, Nepal: 1991–1999
86	20	HIV prevalence rates among sex workers and injecting drug users in selected sites in Indonesia: 2000–2001
87	21	Increase in reported condom use with non-regular partners in selected districts in Uganda: 1996–2000
88	22	Condom procurement gap in sub-Saharan African countries in 1999
92	23	HIV prevalence among men who have sex with men, in selected countries: 1996–2000
99	24	Knowledge and behaviour among sex workers and their clients in Jakarta, Surabaya and Manado, Indonesia: 1996–2000
101	25	HIV prevalence and reported consistent condom use among female sex workers in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire: 1992–1998
107	26	Estimated need for, and probable uptake of, high-efficacy vaccine
107	27	Estimated need for, and probable uptake of, low/moderate-efficacy vaccine
123	28	Voluntary counselling and testing as an entry point for HIV prevention and care
125	29	Percentage of women aged 15–49 who know where to get a HIV test and have been tested: 1998–2000
126	30	Roles, training and responsibilities of VCT counsellors
134	31	Percentage of children aged 10–14 who are still in school, according to whether their parents are alive, in selected countries: 1997–2001
144	32	HIV/AIDS deaths in 2001 and number of people using antiretroviral drugs by end 2001: by region
145	33	Cost of antiretroviral drug purchases, avoided expenditures and final costs to the Ministry of Health Brazil: 1997–2001
146	34	Price (US\$/year) of a first-line antiretroviral regimen in Uganda: 1998–2001
152	35	Projected annual expenditure requirements for HIV/AIDS care and support by 2005, by region
155	36	The HIV/AIDS continuum of care
163	37	Public, private and donor funding for HIV/AIDS, in selected Latin American and Caribbean countries: 2000
165	38	Projected available resources and resource needs in low- and middle-income countries: 2003–2005
166	39	Public expenditure on health as percentage of general government expenditure in African countries: 1998
167	40	Documented available international resources for HIV/AIDS: 2002
168	41	Identified available resources for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, by source, as of April 2002
169	42	How effective are poverty-reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) in tackling AIDS?
172	43	Net Official Development Assistance (ODA) as percentage of gross domestic product (GDP): 2000
180	44	Worldwide assessment of HIV/AIDS programme preparedness (114 countries)

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Preface

In 2001, the world marked 20 years of AIDS. It was an occasion to lament the fact that the epidemic has turned out to be far worse than predicted, saying “*if only we knew then what we know now*”. But we do know now. We know the epidemic is still in its early stages, that effective responses are possible but only when they are politically backed and full-scale, and that unless more is done today and tomorrow, the epidemic will continue to grow.

This report presents the considered views on the state of the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), which is comprised of eight United Nations system agencies. It also presents evidence of the responses to the epidemic mounted by many partners, including governments, the business sector and civil society.

The report provides positive proof that HIV, if left to run its natural course, will cause devastation on an unprecedented scale. One by one, dangerous myths of complacency are being shattered.

In southern Africa, HIV prevalence has not yet stabilized at some natural limit. HIV rates are still on the rise, with HIV infections occurring among more than 40% of all pregnant women, in some locations. In West Africa, apparent stability at lower levels has also turned out to be an illusion, with the epidemic now taking off again. This report refutes the comfortable assumption that parts of Asia were somehow immune to HIV. Indonesia, for example, having seen almost no HIV until now, despite predictable risk factors, finds itself with a growing epidemic. In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the assumption that the epidemic would remain confined to marginalized groups, such as injecting drug users, is turning out to be the worst sort of wishful thinking. An explosive rate of growth is having its inevitable consequence of population-wide spread. And, in high-income countries, where reduced AIDS mortality has made headlines in recent years, increases in unsafe sex and in HIV infections have crept up almost unnoticed.

While inaction has proved to be a deadly mistake, the evidence has never been stronger that action against AIDS gets positive results. This report has many examples of success—communities organizing themselves, school and workplace HIV/AIDS programmes, outstanding national leadership, and new tools (from human rights instruments to antiretroviral treatments) being deployed against the epidemic. Two populations stand out as crucial

in determining success: young people, because they have led the struggle to change behaviours and norms, because they are disproportionately affected by the epidemic and because the future depends on their sustaining change; and people living with HIV/AIDS—young and old, men and women—not only because their lives are on the line, but also because they are the greatest untapped resource with which to fight the epidemic.

The successes reported here must be tempered with realism about the challenges ahead. Pre-eminent among them is the challenge of care. The evidence presented here could not be starker: where care is most needed it is least accessible. The agenda for building the capacity to extend care to all who need it is clearly presented. And, across prevention and care, the case for boosting resources is compellingly made.

Half-measures and piecemeal responses do not work. An agenda for change has been embraced by the United Nations, and by all the nations of the world when they endorsed the Declaration of Commitment at the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS in June 2001.

The time has come to put all the pieces together. Plans have been made. Needs are clear. Solutions are available. Leadership is gathering momentum. Now act!



Peter Piot
Executive Director
Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

Global estimates of HIV/AIDS epidemic as of end 2001



Total number of adults and children living with HIV/AIDS: 40 million

People newly infected with HIV in 2001	Total	5 million
	Adults	4.2 million
	Women	2 million
	Children <15 years	800 000
Number of people living with HIV/AIDS	Total	40 million
	Adults	37.1 million
	Women	18.5 million
	Children <15 years	3 million
AIDS deaths in 2001	Total	3 million
	Adults	2.4 million
	Women	1.1 million
	Children <15 years	580 000
Total number of children orphaned** by AIDS, and living, end 2001		14 million

**Defined as children aged 0–14, as of end 2001, who have lost one or both parents to AIDS.