

AIDS in Africa: Three scenarios to 2025

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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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**“ We live by hope,
but a reed never
became an Iroko tree
by dreaming.**
—Nigerian proverb.

Welcome to AIDS in Africa: Three scenarios to 2025

The decisions we make about the future are guided by our view of how the world works and what we think is possible. A scenario is a story that describes a possible future. Building and using scenarios can help people and organizations to learn, to create wider and more shared understanding, to improve decision-making and to galvanise commitment and informed action. People can use them to challenge their assumptions and implicit beliefs, and look beyond their usual worldview.

Scenarios draw on the age-old tradition of story-telling to help people think more imaginatively about difficult problems. Across the world, every culture tells stories, using them to make sense of the world and pass on that understanding from generation to generation.

This project uses stories rather than projections to explore the future of AIDS in Africa over the next 20 years. Statistics may give a succinct and tragic snapshot of recent events, but they say little of the AIDS epidemic's wider context, or its complex interconnections with other major issues, such as economic development, human security, peace, and violence. Statistics can only hint at the future. Indeed, by 2025, no one under the age of 50 in Africa will be able to remember a world without AIDS.

The book is rich and detailed—reflecting the complexity of its subject matter. There is a summary of the book, in the ‘Executive summary’, and the ‘Scenario analysis’ section provides a survey of the issues covered in the three different scenarios.

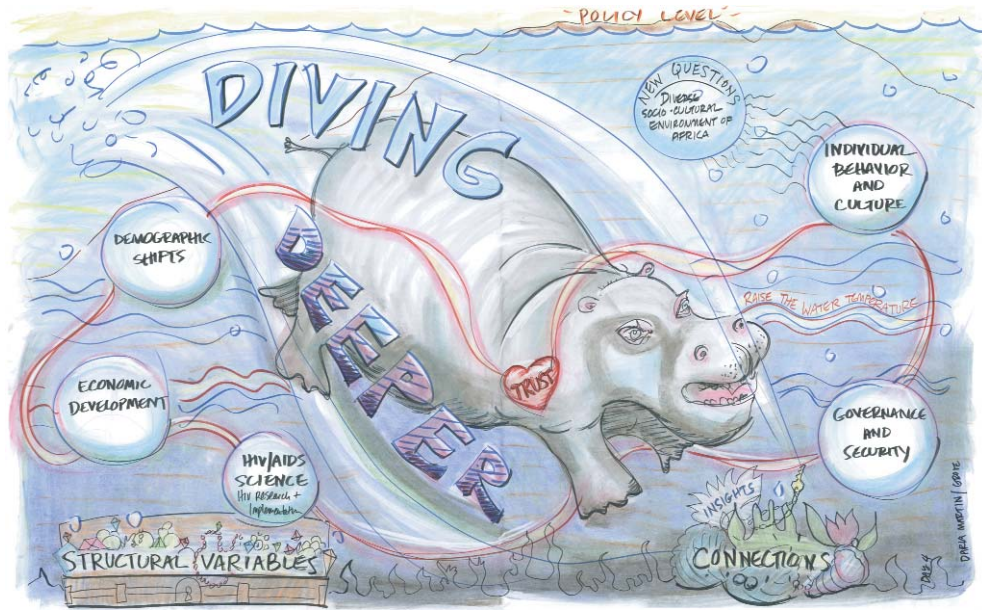


Figure 1.
Looking beyond our
normal worldview.

Some readers may be tempted to turn immediately to the numbers—how many treated, how many new infections, how many deaths by 2025? They are urged to remember that the scenarios are not predictions and that the goal of this project has never been to generate statistics. Its aim has been to explore how seemingly disconnected events and trends (for example, patterns of global trade, the education of girls and women, terrorist attacks on the other side of the world, the rise to power of a certain political regime) can work together to expand or limit an epidemic.

The scenarios were created by a team of about 50, mainly African, men and women. Most of them live and work in Africa, dealing daily with the effects of the epidemic. They brought a wide range of experience and expertise, and were anxious to look beyond, and below the surface of, everyday events, sharing and building on their wide range of understanding.

As the project developed, the team and participants used the image of a hippopotamus in a river to remind themselves of this idea. This is because, when a hippopotamus stands in a river, only a small part of it shows—most of it is hidden. In the same way, if we only pay attention to everyday events, then we may miss the complex patterns and structures that underpin them. A diving hippopotamus reminds us that patterns of behaviour lie below the surface of events, and the structure of the system lies deeper still.

Of course, given the widely varying circumstances, impacts, and effects of the

epidemic in countries across Africa, no set of scenarios can describe all the possible futures that could occur. This project has set out to be provocative rather than comprehensive, stimulating questions and exploration, rather than trying to provide all the answers. We hope that the scenarios will prompt further thinking about the future of the epidemic, not only for the whole of the continent, but also for individual countries and communities. In stimulating further policy dialogue and thinking in the national context, the scenarios may need to be adapted to the particular social, economic, and epidemiological conditions that apply in a particular nation—some suggestions for exercises to explore these issues are made in **Appendix 6**.

For those who want to explore further, the accompanying CD-ROM contains most of the material commissioned for the project, both research papers and interviews, searchable by keyword. It also provides detailed reports of the project workshops and a number of presentations of the scenarios that can be used in group work.

These scenarios represent a crucial step in making sense of the future of the AIDS epidemic in Africa. It is the hope of the project initiators, participants, sponsors, and core team that this material will provide an essential starting point, not only for exploring and expanding people's understanding of the epidemic, but also for sharing that understanding with others.

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Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
ART	Antiretroviral therapy
ARV	Antiretroviral drug
AU	African Union
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)
FDI	Foreign direct investment
GDP	Gross domestic product
GNI	Gross national income
HAART	Highly active antiretroviral therapy
HIPC	Heavily indebted poor countries
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
ODA	Official development assistance
OI	Opportunistic infection
OVC	Orphans and children made vulnerable by AIDS
PLWHA	People living with HIV and AIDS
PMTCT	Prevention of mother-to-child transmission (of HIV)
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
QALY	Quality-adjusted life year
STI	Sexually transmitted infection
TRIPS	Trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
VCT	Voluntary counselling and testing (for HIV)
WTO	World Trade Organization