



FACT SHEET

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WHO'S ROLE IN HIV/AIDS

All WHO fact sheets, press releases, features and other information on HIV/AIDS can be found on <http://www.who.int/hiv/>

OBJECTIVE: TOWARDS UNIVERSAL ACCESS BY 2010

- The HIV/AIDS epidemic is one of the most serious threats to human health and development. In 2006, 4.3 million people were newly infected with HIV and 2.9 million people died of HIV-related illnesses.
- In the Millennium Summit Declaration governments resolved to have halted, and begun to reverse, the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015. Of eight key areas covered by the Millennium Development Goals, six – reduced poverty and child mortality, increased access to education, gender equality, improved maternal health and efforts to combat major infectious diseases – are being undermined by high rates of HIV in many low- and middle-income countries.
- At the June 2006 General Assembly High-Level Meeting on AIDS, United Nations Member States reaffirmed their commitment to the 2001

Declaration of Commitment and the goals that it put forward, and to the agreements of other major United Nations conferences and summits, including the 2005 UN World Summit. They agreed "to pursue all necessary efforts to scale up nationally driven, sustainable and comprehensive responses to achieve broad multi-sectorial coverage of prevention, treatment, care and support, with full and active participation of people living with HIV, vulnerable groups, most affected communities, civil society and the private sector, towards the goal of universal access to comprehensive prevention programmes, treatment, care and support by 2010".

WHO'S ROLE IN HIV/AIDS

- As the directing and coordinating authority on international health work, and as a Cosponsor of UNAIDS, WHO takes the lead within the UN system to support countries

in scaling up HIV treatment, care, and prevention services through the health sector, including targeting appropriate technical and financial assistance, and monitoring progress.

- WHO's work in the HIV/AIDS field is outlined in a plan titled *The contribution of the World Health Organization to scaling up towards universal access to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care, 2006 -2010*. The plan centres around five strategic directions that will not only help countries scale up important HIV/AIDS prevention, care, treatment and support programmes but will also contribute to the broader strengthening of health systems generally. For each of the five strategic directions, WHO is focussing its efforts on a number of priority health sector interventions.

testing and counselling, particularly in the most affected countries. Based on recent demographic and health surveys in 12 sub-Saharan countries, a median percentage of 88% of the men and 90% of the women did not know their HIV status (2003-2005).

- WHO assists countries to develop and implement comprehensive HIV counselling and testing programmes with particular focus on both client- and provider-initiated HIV testing and counselling.
- Testing and counselling need to be closely linked to efforts to increase prevention, treatment, care and support services, protect confidentiality and human rights, reduce stigma and discrimination and support disclosure of HIV status.

WHO'S FIVE STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

The five strategic directions and interventions of the 'public health approach' that WHO is promoting for countries working towards the goal of universal access are as follows:

Strategic Direction 1: Enabling people to know their HIV status through confidential HIV testing and counselling

- In order to identify those who would benefit from prevention, care, support and treatment, it is essential to encourage widespread uptake of

Strategic Direction 2: Maximizing the health sector's contribution to HIV prevention

- Coverage of many HIV prevention services currently remain unacceptably low. For example, in 2005, it was estimated that only 11% of pregnant women were offered services to prevent mother-to-child transmission, and the proportion of injecting drug users receiving some type of prevention services was 8%.
- The health sector has a key role to play in preventing HIV infection in a number of priority areas, including:
 - Prevention of sexual transmission of HIV

- Prevention for people living with HIV/AIDS
- Prevention of HIV transmission through injecting drug use (harm reduction)
- Prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV/AIDS
- Prevention of HIV transmission in the health care setting
- Assessment and development of new HIV prevention technologies and approaches (vaccines, microbicides, male circumcision).

Strategic Direction 3: Accelerating the scale up of HIV/AIDS treatment and care

- By Dec 2006, an estimated 2 015 000 people living with HIV/AIDS were receiving antiretroviral therapy in low- and middle-income countries, representing around 28% of the estimated 7.1 million people in need.
- WHO helps countries scale-up access to HIV treatment with the ultimate goal of achieving at least 80% coverage for those in need worldwide. Current challenges include updating appropriate recommendations for first- and second-line regimens; developing models of delivery that ensure equity and reach those most at risk; maintaining continuous supplies of drugs and diagnostics; and developing improved drug formulations for both adults and children.
- TB is one of the leading causes of HIV-related deaths and morbidity

and in countries with high HIV prevalence, up to 80% of people with TB also test positive for HIV. Better integration of TB and HIV services is therefore needed in countries with high rates of co-infection.

Strategic Direction 4: Strengthening and expanding health systems

- Weak drug procurement and supply management systems, poor laboratory infrastructure and severe human resource shortages are among the major health systems constraints that need to be tackled in countries working towards universal access.
- WHO assists countries with the supply of quality HIV-related commodities as well as technical assistance to strengthen national management systems. WHO also supports countries with the bulk procurement of HIV diagnostic technologies and helps strengthen testing and HIV-related laboratory services by providing guidance, training and technical support.
- A recent WHO initiative titled 'Treat, Train, Retain', aims to tackle shortages of health workers by addressing their needs for HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, improving the quality of training available, and helping to prevent health worker migration.

Strategic Direction 5: Investing in strategic information to guide a more effective response

- The health sector's progress towards universal access needs to be periodically and carefully assessed. Setting country targets for key interventions and tracking progress through monitoring and evaluation are critical to planning and decision-making.
 - WHO helps countries implement comprehensive national monitoring and evaluation systems that can evaluate various interventions and measure their availability, coverage and efficacy.
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Operational research also plays an important role in assessing different approaches. Priority issues include new models of service delivery for vulnerable and high-risk groups; new approaches to HIV counselling and testing; and simultaneous efforts to scale up HIV/AIDS treatment and accelerate prevention.