



The international response

The HIV/AIDS epidemic has prompted an unprecedented array of global, regional national and local responses. Beginning in 1994, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations established the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) to mount and support a coordinated response from the United Nations system. The urgency of a concerted response was recognized by the United Nations Millennium Declaration (General Assembly resolution 55/2, paragraph 19), which noted the resolve of Governments to halt and reverse the spread of the epidemic by 2015. This resolve was reiterated in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS adopted by the United Nations General Assembly special session on HIV/AIDS in 2001, which acknowledged that prevention of HIV/AIDS must be the mainstay of responses to the epidemic. Additional resources are being brought to bear by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, created by the General Assembly in 2002.

Noting the devastating toll of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa, the Secretary-General of the United Nations established the Commission on HIV/AIDS and Governance in Africa in 2003 to make recommendations for combating the disease. Most recently, the high-level meeting to review the achievement of the commitments set out in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS (2 June 2005) afforded an opportunity for the international community to take stock of its efforts to fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Although there have been many examples of progress, the global response to HIV/AIDS still falls short of what is required to successfully tackle the epidemic.

The Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is responsible for providing the international community with up-to-date, accurate and scientifically objective information on population and development. The Population Division monitors and analyses population policies and population trends for all countries and areas of the world, including trends and policies related to HIV/AIDS. This wallchart attempts to provide the most recent data available on population policies and trends related to HIV/AIDS.

The national response

Although Governments began formulating policies concerning HIV/AIDS by the mid-1980s, these policies were frequently fragmented and had a narrow health sector focus. This contrasts sharply with the current situation which is characterized by comprehensive policies and programmes in many countries. Fortright national leadership, combined with public awareness and intensive prevention efforts, has resulted in some notable success. Concern over HIV/AIDS ranks high on the population policy agenda of the large majority of countries. Some 80 per cent of countries report that HIV/AIDS is a major concern.

Governments are pursuing a multipronged strategy to combat HIV/AIDS by focusing on (a) prevention; (b) care and treatment; (c) support in the form of protection from discrimination and stigmatization; (d) development of multisectoral strategies; (e) creation of HIV/AIDS coordination bodies; and (f) establishment of partnerships with civil society, people living with HIV/AIDS, community-based groups, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

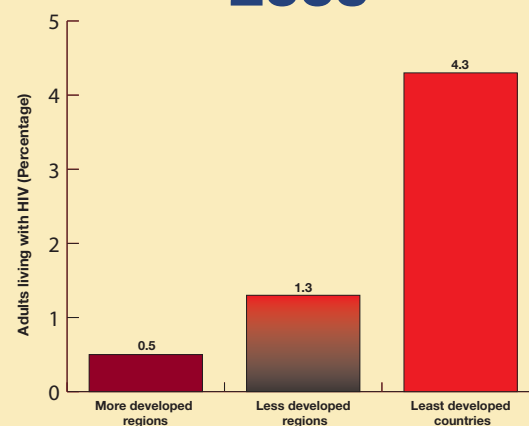
Most Governments have implemented programmes that focus on HIV/AIDS prevention. Comprehensive prevention programmes include a range of strategies, such as information, education and communication (IEC) campaigns; programmes to modify sexual behaviour; condom promotion; voluntary counselling and testing; blood safety; and targeting high-risk groups (sex workers and injecting drug users) and vulnerable groups (young people and pregnant women).

While antiretroviral treatment has significantly prolonged life and reduced the suffering of AIDS victims, access to antiretroviral treatment remains low. Concerted international and national efforts have slashed the price of these medicines, but treatment remains beyond the reach of most victims in low-income countries.

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