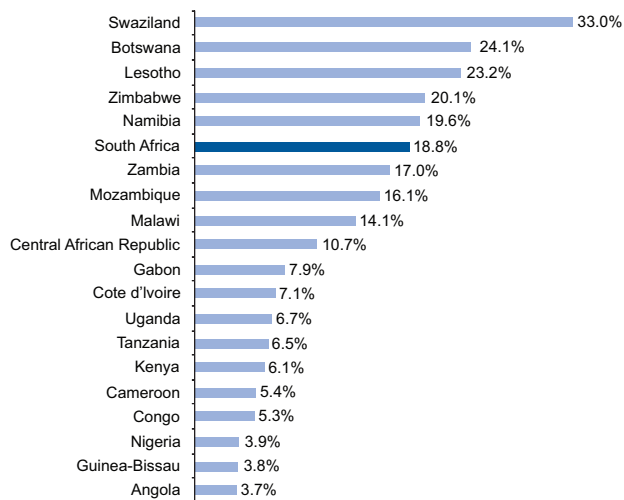


### The HIV/AIDS Epidemic in South Africa

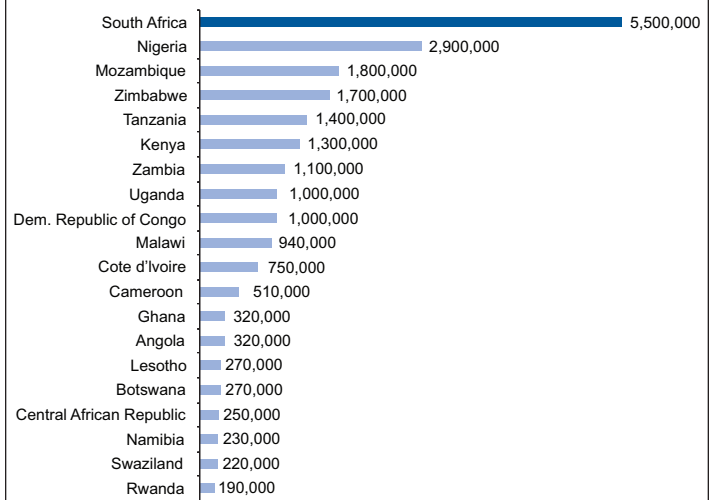
August 2006

South Africa has an estimated 5.5 million people living with HIV/AIDS and is one of the countries hardest hit by the epidemic.<sup>1,2</sup> South Africa's HIV/AIDS prevalence rate (the percent of people living with the disease) is much higher than that of the sub-Saharan African region overall and is among the highest in the world,<sup>1</sup> although prevalence rates have begun to stabilize.<sup>3</sup> The epidemic has already had a profound impact on many aspects of South African society and is projected to affect the country's economic, education, and health sectors if more is not done to stem its tide.<sup>4,5,6</sup> As a middle-income country<sup>7</sup> of significant political and economic importance in the African continent, the future course of South Africa's HIV/AIDS epidemic will have broader implications for Africa overall. The Government of South Africa established the National AIDS Coordinating Committee of South Africa (NACOSA) in 1992 and created the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC) in 2000.<sup>8,9</sup> An *HIV/AIDS/STD Strategic Plan for South Africa 2000–2005* has been implemented. To carry out the *Strategic Plan*, in 2003 the South African Cabinet approved the *Operational Plan for Comprehensive HIV and AIDS Care, Management and Treatment for South Africa*.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 1: Top 20 Countries by HIV/AIDS Prevalence Rate, Sub-Saharan Africa (end 2005)<sup>1,11</sup>**



**Figure 2: Top 20 Countries by Number of People Living with HIV/AIDS, Sub-Saharan Africa (end 2005)<sup>1</sup>**



### Overview

- The first case of HIV/AIDS in South Africa was reported in 1982.<sup>12</sup>
- South Africa has an estimated 5.5 million people living with HIV/AIDS as of the end of 2005, the second highest number of any country in the world.<sup>1</sup>
- The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate<sup>11</sup> in South Africa is 18.8%, compared to 6.1% in sub-Saharan Africa and 1.0% globally.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2005, an estimated 320,000 South Africans died of HIV/AIDS.<sup>1</sup> HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death in almost all South African provinces<sup>13</sup> and is also the leading cause of death among South African children under age five.<sup>14</sup>
- HIV is spread primarily through heterosexual sex in South Africa.<sup>15</sup>

### Populations and Regions Affected

- Women account for over half (58%) of adults<sup>16</sup> estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS in South Africa.<sup>1</sup>
- Young people have been particularly affected by HIV/AIDS in South Africa, especially young women.<sup>1,3,15,17</sup> Among young South Africans ages 15–24, the estimated number of young women living with HIV/AIDS is more than three times that of young men (14.8% compared to 4.5%).<sup>1</sup> Young women ages 25–34 have the highest rates of infection among women.<sup>3</sup>
- In 2005, 240,000 children<sup>18</sup> in South Africa were estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS and there were an estimated 1.2 million AIDS orphans.<sup>1,19</sup>
- There is significant variation in the epidemic's impact by region, with the highest rates occurring in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, and the lowest in the Western Cape, Northern Cape and Limpopo.<sup>3</sup>

### Other Key Data

- *Concern about HIV/AIDS and other epidemics:* South Africans are concerned about HIV/AIDS. More than nine in ten (96%) say that HIV/AIDS and other epidemics are a "very big" problem in their country. Over four-fifths (90%) of South Africans feel that HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases are the greatest threat to the world.<sup>20</sup> South African youth are also concerned about HIV/AIDS.<sup>17</sup>
- *Knowledge of HIV/AIDS:* Studies have found that general awareness of HIV/AIDS in South Africa is high.<sup>10,17,21</sup> For example, between 80–90% of youth surveyed between the ages of 15 and 24 were aware that HIV causes AIDS and HIV infection is prevented by using condoms.

- **Access to Antiretroviral Therapy (ART):** Although the Government of South Africa has begun to scale up access to ART through its *Operational Plan for Comprehensive HIV and AIDS Care, Management and Treatment for South Africa*, access to this treatment is still limited in South Africa. With almost 1 million people in need of ART, South Africa has one of the highest unmet needs for ART in the world<sup>22</sup> and is one of six countries that comprise more than half of treatment need in low- and middle-income countries.<sup>1</sup> However, progress has been made. As of the end of 2005, an estimated 178,000-235,000 people in the country were receiving ART (21% of those in need) and South Africa accounted for one-quarter of all people on ART in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>23</sup> A large portion of the Government of South Africa's US\$1 billion commitment to HIV/AIDS over a 3-year period was designated for ART.<sup>23</sup>
- **Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) of HIV:** In September 2001, the South African government initiated a national program to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV. In 2005, PMTCT services were available at over 3,000 health sites nationwide,<sup>10</sup> making the program among the largest PMTCT programs in the world.<sup>24</sup> The government estimates that 78.7% of HIV-positive pregnant women received nevirapine in 2004 to reduce the possibility of transmitting HIV to their infants.<sup>10</sup>

### International Support/Major Donors

- A number of donor governments provide funding and other support to address South Africa's HIV/AIDS epidemic including: the United States, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Australia, Germany and the European Union.<sup>8</sup> South Africa is one of the 15 focus countries of the United States Government's President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). U.S. bilateral aid for South Africa was nearly \$148.2 million in FY2005, and is expected to increase to \$221.5 million in FY2006.<sup>25</sup> The U.S. also provides support for HIV/AIDS efforts around the world through its contributions to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (The Global Fund).
- The Global Fund has approved four HIV/AIDS grants (including HIV/TB grants) in South Africa.<sup>26</sup>
- UNAIDS and the UN Family support a variety of HIV/AIDS activities in South Africa.<sup>4,8</sup>

**Table 1: HIV/AIDS in South Africa**

Indicator	South Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	Global
Estimated number of people living with HIV/AIDS, 2005 <sup>1</sup>	5.5 million	24.5 million	38.6 million
Percent of adult population estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS, 2005 <sup>1,11</sup>	18.8%	6.1%	1.0%
Estimated number of deaths due to HIV/AIDS, 2005 <sup>1</sup>	320,000	2.0 million	2.8 million
Women as percent of adults estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS, 2005 <sup>1,16</sup>	58%	59%	48%
Percent of young women, ages 15–24, estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS, 2005 <sup>1</sup>	14.8%	4.3%	NA
Percent of young men, ages 15–24, estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS, 2005 <sup>1</sup>	4.5%	1.5%	NA
Estimated number of AIDS orphans, 2005 <sup>1,19</sup>	1.2 million	12.0 million	15.2 million
Number of people estimated to be receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART), end 2005 <sup>23</sup>	178,000–235,000	730,000–890,000	1.2–1.46 million <sup>27</sup>
Number of people estimated to be in need of ART, 2005 <sup>23,28</sup>	983,000	4.7 million	6.5 million <sup>27</sup>

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