

Facts and Figures

1999 World AIDS Campaign

**Joint United Nations Programme
on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), February 1999**

Facts and Figures

Children and young people – the under-25s

- According to estimates by UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/ AIDS, more than 3 million children and young people worldwide became infected with HIV in 1998. This included almost 590 000 children under 15 and over 2.5 million 15-24 year olds.
-
- During 1998, more than 8500 children and young people became infected with HIV each day – six every minute.
-

Children 0-14 years old

- By the end of 1998 UNAIDS estimates that there were already over 33.4 million people worldwide living with HIV, of whom 43% are women. In some of the worst-affected countries, 2 or more out of 5 pregnant women attending antenatal clinics in urban areas are HIV-infected.
-
- Among HIV-positive women who breastfeed and do not receive a preventive regimen of antiretroviral pills, the chances that their child will become infected through mother-to-child transmission range from 25% to 35%.
-
- Altogether, according to UNAIDS and WHO estimates, more than 4 million children under age 15 have been infected with HIV since the epidemic began.
-
- More than 90% of them were infants born to HIV-positive mothers who acquired the virus before or during birth or through breast-feeding.
-
- Hundreds of thousands were children under 15 who became infected through blood transfusions or through sex.
-
- In 1998 alone, 590 000 children under the age of 15 became infected with HIV. This brought the total number of children in this age group living with the virus to 1.2 million at the end of 1998.
-
- Because HIV infection often progresses quickly to AIDS in children, most of the children under 15 who have been infected since the start of the epidemic have developed AIDS, and most of these have died.
-
- Of the 2.5 million people who died of AIDS in 1998, 510 000 were children under the age of 15.
-
- The US Bureau of the Census estimates that by the year 2010, if the spread of HIV is not contained, AIDS may increase infant mortality by as much as 75% and mortality in children under 5 by more than 100% in those regions most affected by the disease.
-
- UNAIDS estimates that, by the end of 1997, 8.2 million children had lost their mother to AIDS before they turned 15.
-
- An estimated 6.2 million orphans under age 15 were alive at the end of 1997, struggling to survive after the death of their mother or of both parents from AIDS. More than 95% of these children live in Africa south of the Sahara.
-

Facts and Figures

- Most children orphaned by AIDS are concentrated in those countries most affected by the epidemic. For example, data provided by the US Bureau of the Census and the World Bank indicate that 1.7 million Ugandan children have become orphans as a result of AIDS since the beginning of the epidemic.
- According to UNICEF, children orphaned by AIDS are the largest and fastest growing group of children in difficult circumstances in Zimbabwe. UNAIDS and WHO estimate that by 1997, approximately 7% of the country's children under 15 had lost their mothers to AIDS.
- Even children who are neither infected with HIV nor orphaned by AIDS are affected by the socioeconomic fallout from the epidemic in hard-hit communities and countries. An AIDSCAP study estimated that, by the year 2005, Kenya's Gross Domestic product (GDP) will be 14.5% smaller than it would have been had AIDS never occurred. Per capita income is projected to be reduced by 10%.
- The vulnerability of girls to HIV infection is exacerbated by denial or neglect of their recognized human rights — including gender discrimination — resulting in inadequate control over their exposure to sexual HIV transmission and poor access to socioeconomic opportunities.
- Commercial sexual exploitation and domestic sexual abuse of children are contributing risk factors for HIV infection among children.
- Figures reported to the 1996 World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children indicated that worldwide more than 1 million children enter the sex trade every year.
- An unknown number of children worldwide are at risk of sexual abuse by relatives, other members of the child's community or strangers.
- Estimates suggest that there are as many as 100 million children and adolescents in the world who are working or living on the street, often in violent and dangerous situations.
- The physical and mental abuse of children may increase the likelihood of their engaging in risk-taking sexual behaviour and thus increasing their vulnerability to HIV.

Young people aged 15-24

- Around one-third of the 33 million people living with HIV in the world at the end of 1998 are young people aged 15-24.
- Around half of all new HIV infections occur in the same age range. This is an age when most people start their sexual lives.
- In 1998, nearly 3 million young people became infected with the virus — that is more than five young men and women every minute of the day, every day of the year.
- A recent study in Malawi measured yearly HIV incidence at nearly 6 percent in teenage women, as compared with less than one percent in women over 35.

Facts and Figures

- In the developing countries, which saw over 95% of the world's new HIV infections in 1998, there are hundreds of millions of 15-24 year-olds — an enormous part of the population.

- Where they have been able to access appropriate knowledge, skills and means, today's young people have shown a remarkable propensity to adopt safer behaviours — more so than previous generations or older adults.

- In northern Thailand, half as many 21-year-old men visited sex workers in 1995 as had done so four years earlier. Those young men who visited sex workers were far more likely to use condoms — 93% in 1995 versus 61% of the same age in 1991.

- In Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, condom use among people under 25 is noticeably higher than among older groups.

- In Chile, a 1996 study showed that condom use is highest among 15-18 year-olds, and similar patterns have been found in Brazil and Mexico.

- In Senegal, two out of five women under 25 and two-thirds of men used condoms with non-regular partners in 1997, compared with less than 5% at the start of the decade.

- In many countries in both the industrialized and developing world, 15-19 year olds are increasingly abstaining from sex in the face of HIV. In Uganda, for example, by 1995 over 50% of the men and 46% of the women in that age-group said they had never had sex, more than a three-quarters increase over the 1989 figures for either sex.

- In Western Europe, some 60% of young people are now using condoms the very first time they ever have sex, a six-fold increase since the early 1990s.

- HIV prevention works, particularly with young people. Among Thai male 21-year-olds, there were half as many STD infections and a third fewer HIV infections in 1995 than had been recorded four years earlier.

- In Uganda, HIV infections among pregnant teenagers aged 15-19 have substantially decreased in several urban clinics, in some cases falling to under 5% from over 20% at the start of the decade.

- Neighbouring Tanzania has seen similar decreases in HIV incidence among women under 25. In both rural and urban settings in one area of the country, HIV infection in young women has fallen by almost two-thirds.

- In societies where the epidemic is heterosexually driven, young women are more exposed to the risk of HIV infection than young men for both physiological and societal reasons. This is especially true of women who are dependent on sexual relationships with men for socio-economic survival.

- Girls are also exposed to HIV earlier than boys. A preliminary analysis of multi-site studies sponsored by UNAIDS and its partners shows that in western Kenya, nearly 1 girl in 4 aged 15-19 is already living with HIV, compared with 1 boy in 25.

Facts and Figures

- In Zambia in the same age group 16% of girls versus just 1% of boys are HIV-infected. In Rwanda, rates for boys and girls are similar through the teens, but in their early 20s females are significantly more likely to be infected — 14% of women versus 9% of men.

- The picture is somewhat different where injecting drug use is the driving force for HIV transmission. In many developing countries, drug injectors are overwhelmingly male.

- In Eastern Europe, HIV infection rates are growing fastest among injecting drug users, most of whom are young men.

- In Myanmar, over 60% of teenage drug injectors are infected with HIV — indeed teenagers are the only group of drug injectors among whom HIV prevalence has continued to climb steadily since the early 1990s.

- In Brazil, drug injection and sex between men contribute to higher infection rates in young men than in young women. Almost three-quarters of non-paediatric AIDS cases in Brazilians under 25 have occurred in males.

- In Ethiopia, condom use has been promoted as a prevention strategy among young people. As a result, condoms have become more available and less costly, and their use has become a socially accepted norm among young people. Condom sales increased from 3 million pieces in 1991 to 20 million pieces in 1996.

- In Thailand, private-sector involvement in condom accessibility and social marketing contributed to the doubling of condom use among young people in the mid-1990s. A 1997 national survey in the general population showed that 87% of men aged 20-24 used condoms every time with brothel sex workers.

- A UNAIDS review of over 50 studies has shown that sexual health education programmes do not encourage sexual experimentation. When quality criteria are met, such programmes actually help to delay the age of first intercourse. They also reduce sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancy in adolescents who are sexually active.

- Successful school AIDS education programmes that include family life and life skills education and sexual health education exist, for example, in parts of India, Zimbabwe and the Caribbean.

- Given a chance, young people have proven through their direct engagement that they have a great deal to contribute to a community response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. They are a force for change.
