

## HIV/AIDS – a global threat

HIV/AIDS transcends all borders; it is relentless in its global spread, infecting over 450 people every hour – totalling more than 4 million people per year. In 2006, 39.5 million people were living with HIV, approximately 95% of them in developing countries. In the past two years this number has increased in every region of the world, 2.6 million more than in 2004. Since the beginning of the pandemic 25 years ago, more than 25 million people have died of AIDS.

### **World's most affected areas**

Sub-Saharan Africa continues to bear the brunt of the global epidemic with almost 25 million HIV-infected individuals. The steepest increases in HIV infections occurred in East Asia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, where the number of people living with HIV in 2006 was 21% higher than in 2004. India has the largest number of people living with HIV in the world – an estimated 5.7 million at the end in 2006. South Africa is the country with the second greatest number of people living with HIV, 5.5 million.<sup>1</sup>

### Global summary of the HIV and AIDS epidemic, 2006

Number of people living with HIV in 2006		Total	39.5 million [34.1 – 47.1 million]
	Adults		37.2 million [32.1 – 44.5 million]
	Women		17.7 million [15.1 – 20.9 million]
	Children under 15 years		2.3 million [1.7 – 3.5 million]
People newly infected with HIV in 2006		Total	4.3 million [3.6 – 6.6 million]
	Adults		3.8 million [3.2 – 5.7 million]
	Children under 15 years		530 000 [410 000 – 660 000]
AIDS deaths in 2006		Total	2.9 million [2.5 – 3.5 million]
	Adults		2.6 million [2.2 – 3.0 million]
	Children under 15 years		380 000 [290 000 – 500 000]

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Source: UNAIDS / WHO, Core slides - AIDS epidemic up-date, December 2006.

### **Women**

Women make up almost half of the total number of people infected with HIV. Women are disproportionately affected, probably because of greater biological vulnerability (HIV may pass more easily from a man to a woman than from a woman to a man). Social factors such as gender inequality and lack of social and economic power make it difficult, if not impossible, for women to negotiate safer sex. In many parts of the world, young women in particular are often exposed to HIV by engaging in sexual relations with older men because of economic necessity or tradition.

*'How we fare in the fight against AIDS is crucial. Halting the spread is not only a Millennium Development Goal in itself; it is a prerequisite for reaching most of the others. Only if we meet this challenge can we succeed in our efforts to build a humane, healthy and equitable world.'*

Kofi Annan, Former Secretary General United Nations  
at the United Nations High Level meeting – New York, 2 June 2005.

### **Economic and social impact of HIV/AIDS<sup>ii</sup>**

HIV/AIDS has a direct and negative impact on development in many countries, deepening poverty and undermining efforts to reduce child mortality, reducing growth rates and, in some countries, depressing economies by more than two per cent annually. Economic experts and world leaders agree that HIV/AIDS poses a major threat to achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) — internationally agreed-upon targets for improving living standards worldwide.\* At current rates, the Worldbank calculates that by 2026 in a typical sub-Saharan country, an HIV prevalence rate of 20% will lower the country's GDP (Gross Domestic Product = the market value of all final goods and services produced within a country in a given period of time) by 67%. Globally, a number of countries are experiencing a reversal in development progress due to the impact of the disease.

*\* The United Nations Millennium Development Goals are eight goals that all 191 UN Member States have agreed to try to achieve by the year 2015, signed in September 2000.*

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<sup>i</sup> [http://www.thebody.com/kaiser/2006/may31\\_06/unaid\\_report.html](http://www.thebody.com/kaiser/2006/may31_06/unaid_report.html)

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/aidsecon/toolkit/intro.htm>, pp. 2-5