



With breaking stories and
newswire products from

UN NEWS CENTRE



Investment in anti-HIV/AIDS services paying off, but sustained effort needed – UN



30 November 2011 –

Growing access to HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention services resulted in a 15 per cent decline in new infections over the past decade and a 22 per cent drop in AIDS-related deaths in the past five years, the United Nations [reported](#) today, urging sustained long-term effort to combat the disease.

“It has taken the world 10 years to achieve this level of momentum,” said Gottfried Hirnschall, the Director of WHO’s HIV/AIDS Department, releasing a report produced in conjunction with UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) and the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS ([UNAIDS](#)) on the global response to the pandemic.

“There is now a very real possibility of getting ahead of the epidemic. But this can only be achieved by both sustaining and accelerating this momentum over the next decade and beyond,” said Mr. Hirschall.

Advances in HIV science and programme innovations over the past year have raised hope for further progress in the future, according to the report, released ahead of the World AIDS Day, which is marked on 1 December every year.

It is crucial that new science, technologies and approaches be applied to improve the efficacy of HIV programmes especially during the current global economic uncertainty and related austerity measures, according to the report.

Some of the successes include improved access to HIV testing services, according to the report, highlighting, for example, that 61 per cent of pregnant women in Eastern and Southern Africa now receive testing and counselling for HIV, up from 14 per cent in 2005. An estimated 48 per cent of pregnant women in need of effective medicines to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV received them last year.

Antiretroviral therapies (ART), which improve the health and well-being of those infected and stop further HIV transmission, are available now for 6.65 million people in low- and middle-income countries, which account for 47 per cent of the 14.2 million people eligible to receive them.

The report acknowledges that investment in HIV services could lead to total gains of up to \$34 billion by 2020 in increased economic activity and productivity, more than offsetting the costs of ART programmes, pointing out that healthier people are better able to engage in financially gainful activities.

Despite the progress, more than half of all infected people in need of antiretroviral therapies in low- and middle-income countries are still unable to access them. Many do not even know that they are infected.

Some countries are still not tailoring their programmes to meet the needs of those most at risk or in need. In many cases, vulnerable groups – including adolescent girls, people who inject drugs, men who have sex with men, transgender people, sex workers, prisoners and migrants – remain unable to access HIV prevention and treatment services, the report notes.

Paul De Lay, Deputy Executive Director of UNAIDS, cautioned that funding shortfalls could undermine efforts to roll back the disease.

“To reach these targets, we estimate we need between \$22 and 24 billion per year by the year 2015,” he told UN Radio.

“Today we are falling short by seven billion. Now, more than ever, ending AIDS requires a unified approach of governments, multilateral agencies, NGOs [non-governmental organizations], foundations, the private sector and individuals.”

Children have not benefited as much as adults from treatment, care and support, according to Leila Pakkala, Director of the UNICEF office in Geneva.

“The coverage of HIV interventions for children remains alarmingly low. Through concerted action and equity-focused strategies, we must make sure that global efforts are working for children as well as adults,” said Ms. Pakkala.

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

[Efforts to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS are yielding progress – UN report](#)