

The HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Sub-Saharan Africa

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The HIV/AIDS epidemic has had its most profound impact to date in Sub-Saharan Africa. The majority of people living with HIV/AIDS (63%), new HIV infections (65%), and AIDS-related deaths (72%) are in this region, which only accounts for 11% of the world's population.^{1,2,3} Life expectancy gains over the past century have been halted and in some cases reversed in many of the hardest hit countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Botswana, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.⁴ There are more than 5 million people living with HIV in South Africa alone and Swaziland has the highest adult HIV/AIDS prevalence rate (percent of people living with HIV/AIDS)⁵ in the world.¹ Almost all countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have generalized epidemics; that is, their prevalence rates are greater than 1%.^{1,4} In several nations, more than 10% of adults⁵ are already estimated to be HIV-positive.⁴ Women⁶ make up the majority of those living with HIV/AIDS in the region, and young people are at particular risk.^{1,4,7} The epidemic has already posed serious development challenges for the region and has affected communities, families, livelihoods, and numerous sectors of society.¹ Most countries in the region are low-income and heavily or moderately indebted, according to the World Bank,⁸ and other challenges some face include food insecurity, internal migration, and conflict. Yet the epidemic is quite diverse throughout Sub-Saharan Africa and, despite these challenges, there have been success stories, with some countries experiencing stabilization and even reductions in HIV prevalence.¹ For example, HIV prevalence has declined among young people over the past several years in 8 of 11 countries with sufficient data to analyze these trends.¹ However, the successes are not strong or widespread enough to affect the overall impact on the region. Most countries in the region have developed national responses to HIV/AIDS through National AIDS Commissions, legislation, programs, and services.^{9,10}

Figure 1: Snapshot of the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2006¹

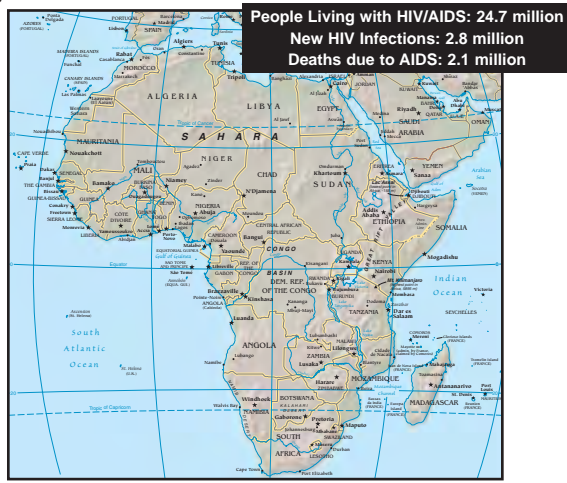
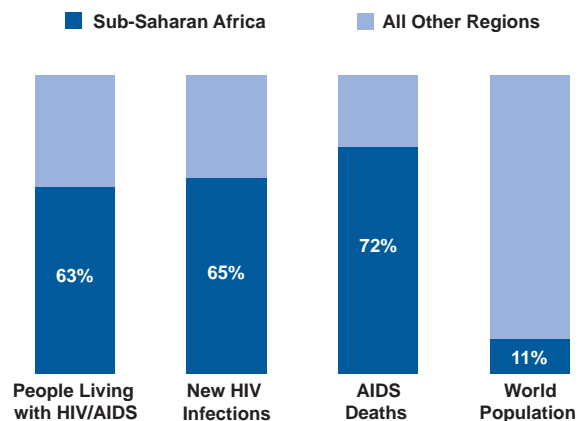


Figure 2: Sub-Saharan Africa as a Percent of the Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic, 2006^{1,3}



Overview

- The first case of what was later identified as AIDS was officially reported in Africa in 1982.^{11,12}
- As of the end of 2006, an estimated 24.7 million people were living with HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa, representing almost two thirds (63%) of the global total of people living with HIV/AIDS.¹
- The adult HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in Sub-Saharan Africa was the highest of any region in the world (5.9% as of the end of 2006), and significantly higher than the global prevalence rate (1.0%).^{1,5}
- Of the 4.3 million new HIV infections estimated to occur worldwide in 2006, 2.8 million (65%) were in Sub-Saharan Africa. Also in that year, there were an estimated 2.1 million deaths due to AIDS in the region, or 7 in 10 (72%) of all AIDS-related deaths worldwide.¹ HIV is the leading cause of death in Africa.¹³
- HIV in Africa is spread primarily through heterosexual sex, although transmission patterns vary across the region and within countries.¹

Populations and Regions Affected

- More African women than ever before are living with HIV and women are more likely than men to be infected with HIV.^{1,2} Women account for the majority of adults estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS in the region (59%).^{1,6} The impact on women is even more pronounced in some countries within the region. In Guinea, for example, more than two-thirds (68%) of adults living with HIV/AIDS are women.⁴
- Young people are at particular risk; 62% of the world's young people living with HIV/AIDS are in Sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁴ Young women are especially vulnerable, with those aged 15–24 comprising 76% of all young people estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa; in some countries within the region, infection rates are up to 6 times higher among young women compared to men.^{7,14} As of the end of 2005, the prevalence rate among young women 15–24 in the region was 4.3%, while it was 1.5% for young men in the same age group.⁴ The impact on young people is exacerbated by the fact that the population of Sub-Saharan Africa is quite young relative to other regions in the world, with 44% of the population below the age of 15 (compared to 29% globally).³
- Most children¹⁵ living with HIV/AIDS are in Sub-Saharan Africa (2.1 million, or 91% of the global total, as of the end of 2006), as are most of the world's AIDS orphans¹⁶ (12.0 million or 79% of the total as of the end of 2005).^{4,17}
- The epidemic has had a varied impact across the region, with the most severe impact in Southern Africa where one third (32%) of all people with HIV/AIDS worldwide live.¹

Other Key Data

- **Knowledge of HIV/AIDS:** Studies have found varied levels of general awareness of HIV/AIDS in African countries, as well as persistent examples of misconceptions and stigma.^{1,4}
- **Prevention:** Recent estimates indicate that Sub-Saharan Africa faces a significant prevention funding and coverage gap.^{18,19} For example, in a survey of 12 high prevalence countries in the region, only 12% of men and 10% of women had access to HIV testing services and only 11% of pregnant women with HIV received antiretrovirals for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV.¹⁹
- **Access to Antiretroviral Therapy (ART):** Access to ART has dramatically expanded in Sub-Saharan Africa—an estimated 1.3 million people in the region were receiving ART as of December 2006, a more than ten-fold increase since December 2003. Despite this progress, Sub-Saharan Africa faces the greatest need for ART in the world. Only a quarter (28%) of the 4.8 million people living with HIV/AIDS who need ART in the region currently have access to this treatment.¹⁹

International Support/Major Donors

- Numerous donor governments provide funding and other support to address HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa, both through regional and country-specific efforts. Sub-Saharan Africa is a major focus of the United States Government's President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which provides most of its bilateral funding to 15 countries, 12 of which are in Sub-Saharan Africa.²⁰ U.S. bilateral aid for these 12 countries totaled almost \$1.5 billion in FY 2006.²¹ The U.S. also provides funding 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 nearly 80 HIV/AIDS grants (including HIV/TB grants) in 38 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, totaling \$2.7 billion in approved funding and representing more than 60% of all Global Fund grants approved in the region.²²
- UNAIDS and its 10 co-sponsors support numerous HIV/AIDS programs, partnerships, and other activities throughout Sub-Saharan Africa.^{10,23} One of the biggest such funding efforts is the World Bank's Multi-Country HIV/AIDS Program (MAP) for Africa, launched in 2000; to date, MAP has provided more than \$1 billion in grant funding to 29 African countries and 4 sub-regional projects.²⁴

Figure 3: Percent of Adults Estimated to be Living with HIV/AIDS by Region, 2006^{1,5}

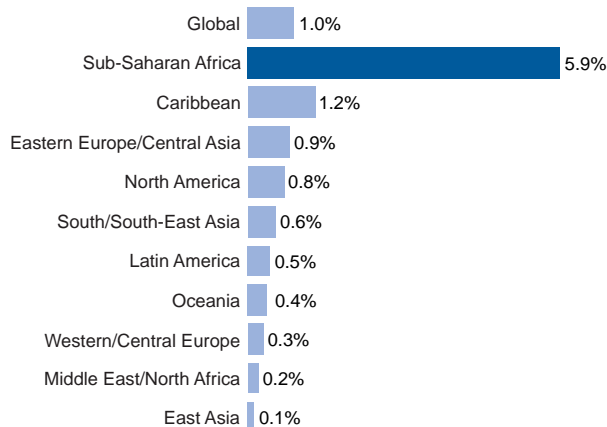
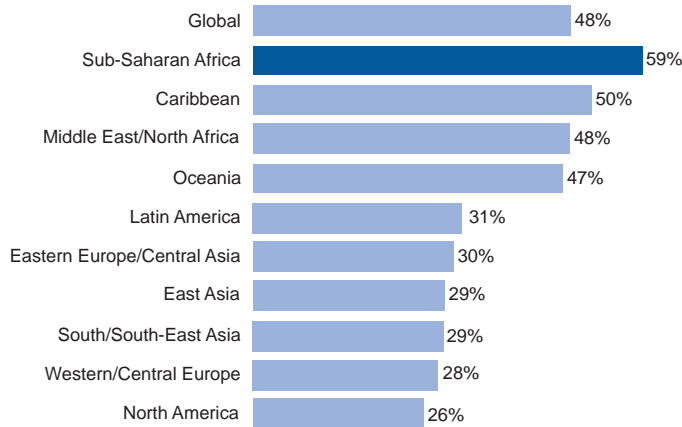


Figure 4: Women as a Percent of Adults Living with HIV/AIDS by Region, 2006^{1,6}



Key Sources/Websites

- African Council of AIDS Service Organizations (AfriCASO): www.africaso.net
- Southern African Network of AIDS Service Organisations (SANASO): www.sanaso.org.zw
- Western Africa Network of AIDS Service Organizations (WANASO): www.wanaso.org/
- Southern Africa HIV/AIDS Information Dissemination Service (SAfAIDS): www.safaiids.org.zw/index.cfm
- UNAIDS Sub-Saharan Africa Regional Page: http://www.unaids.org/en/Regions_Countries/Regions/SubSaharanAfrica.asp
- World Bank, HIV/AIDS in Africa: www.worldbank.org/afr/aids/
- World Health Organization, HIV/AIDS Regional Page for Africa: www.afro.who.int/aids/
- Broadcast HIV Africa: www.broadcasthivafrica.org

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- 21 The United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, *The Power of Partnerships: Third Annual Report to Congress on PEPFAR*; 2007.
- 22 The Global Fund: www.theglobalfund.org; as of May 31, 2007.
- 23 UNAIDS: www.unaids.org.
- 24 World Bank, "AIDS Regional Update: Africa": www.worldbank.org/afr/aids/overview.htm.

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