

## A complex pandemic

Over the past 25 years, AIDS has resulted in the deaths of over 20 million people. In 2005, nearly 40 million people were living with HIV, and 4.1 million people were newly infected with the virus. Women account for nearly half of HIV infections worldwide, and female infection rates are rising in almost every region.

The impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on the lives of children and adolescents has been especially devastating. By the end of 2005, an estimated 15 million children across the world had lost one or both parents to AIDS, resulting in numerous households headed by children, large numbers of children dropping out of school, and increased child poverty and poor health. Currently, well over 10 million young people between the ages of 15 and 24 are living with HIV/AIDS.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic leaves no sector untouched, undermining the efforts of developing countries to lift themselves out of poverty. The pandemic is both a cause and a result of poverty. It is driven by the complex interaction of many factors, including gender inequalities, humanitarian crises, armed conflict, unemployment, and discrimination.



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## A comprehensive approach

Canada is committed to working with partners at all levels, including people living with HIV/AIDS, for universal access to services for HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) bases its approach to HIV/AIDS on the following principles:

- promoting and protecting human rights;
- ensuring children's rights to protection from discrimination, exploitation, and abuse;
- promoting gender equality;
- fighting stigma and discrimination;
- ensuring a comprehensive approach to prevention based on sound public-health evidence;
- strengthening health systems to provide greater access to medicines and basic health services; and
- providing education for prevention of HIV/AIDS.

As part of its contribution to this global effort, Canada has committed \$800 million, through CIDA, to combat HIV/AIDS in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Eastern Europe. This amount includes \$550 million to the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, of which 60% goes to combatting HIV/AIDS.

## Getting results

### Effective prevention

#### *Parent-to-child transmission*

In Zimbabwe, CIDA is supporting McGill University to set up 14 programs in rural hospitals aimed at the prevention of parent-to-child transmission. Since 2003, these programs have reached some 20,000 women. Specifically, 14,000 women have taken part in education and awareness workshops about transmission; more than 6,500 women have received testing and counselling services; and more than 800 women and 650 infants have accessed anti-retroviral treatment.

#### *Harm-reduction programs*

CIDA is working in the Balkans, Russia, Tajikistan, and Ukraine to support policies and legislation that increase public awareness about HIV/AIDS, drug use, and harm reduction, as well as programs to address these issues. With CIDA support, for example, a non-governmental organization and the Government of Ukraine set up six pilot projects to provide injection drug users with substitution treatment.

### Care, treatment, and support

#### *Building community capacity*

With CIDA support, the Southern Africa AIDS Training Programme (SAT) was established in 1990 by the Canadian Public Health Association to strengthen community-based responses to HIV/AIDS in Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Now an independent organization known as the Southern African AIDS Trust, SAT has provided services to 340,000 children affected by HIV/AIDS to date. In addition, 42,000 people living with AIDS have received improved home-based care services, and 43,000 people have gained access to voluntary HIV counselling and testing services.

#### *Access to anti-retroviral therapy*

CIDA was one of the first and largest donors to the 3 by 5 Initiative of the World Health Organization (WHO), which aimed to help three million people in developing countries to access HIV treatment by December 2005. Between December 2003 and December 2005, this initiative helped over 1 million people in the developing world to gain access to drug therapy for HIV/AIDS, an increase of 200 percent.

Anti-retroviral (ARV) therapy helps people living with HIV/AIDS to cope with the disease. CIDA's support has helped Mozambique to expand access to ARV drugs to those most in need: between 2004 and 2005, the number of people on ARV drugs nearly tripled, from just over 7,400 to almost 20,000. In Tanzania, CIDA has helped enroll 55,000 women and men in AIDS treatment programs; some 26,000 people, including 2,500 children, currently receive ARV treatment.

### Innovation and research

#### *Vaccines and microbicides*

Canada is a strong supporter of AIDS vaccine and microbicide research and development. Since 2005, through support from CIDA and other donors, more than 13 clinical trials of preventative AIDS vaccines got underway globally, while a number of microbicide trials were initiated across Africa.



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In Pakistan, Canada has enabled the government to implement an effective second-generation surveillance system for HIV/AIDS. The project developed a method of mapping high-risk groups that has become the national standard. As a result, the government can now target HIV/AIDS services to those who need them most.

### Gender, human rights, and child protection

In northern Uganda, horrendous conditions in camps for displaced persons have led to a breakdown in traditional family and community structures and values. Women and children, particularly girls, are vulnerable to sexual attack, communicable diseases, systematic rape, forced prostitution, and poverty.

Research funded through CIDA's Child Protection Research Fund shows how reviving traditional family and community structures can strengthen protection and psychosocial support for sexually exploited children in conflict situations.

In Tanzania, CIDA funds reproductive health and HIV/AIDS outreach services for women and men of all ages in an attempt to address the gender dynamics of the pandemic. These services include counselling for couples to foster greater dialogue between women and men on sexual and reproductive health, an issue often surrounded by a culture of silence. To date, these services have reached almost 500,000 clients.

In Nigeria, CIDA has helped national, state, and local governments, as well as NGOs, to integrate gender equality and human-rights factors into work on HIV/AIDS. As a result, gender considerations are fully part of the HIV/AIDS National Strategic Framework for Action (2005–2009) developed by the Nigerian Government.

#### *Fighting stigma and discrimination*

CIDA worked with the Association of Canadian Community Colleges to support 30 projects that have addressed HIV/AIDS. In Ghana, for example, universities are changing people's attitudes towards HIV/AIDS and reducing the stigma associated with the condition. In Madagascar, another of these projects has trained 10 doctors and 30 paramedic staff and has enabled health practitioners to harness the latest knowledge and technologies to diagnose, treat, and prevent HIV/AIDS. In the Caribbean, CIDA's support to the Caribbean Epidemiology Centre (CAREC) has contributed to the adoption of a framework for action to reduce stigma and discrimination against persons living with HIV/AIDS.

### Youth

Through a CIDA-funded project in Zimbabwe, 2,336 young people in 15 secondary schools gained the skills to make informed decisions about issues related to HIV/AIDS and sex. In Haiti, CIDA enabled 15 local NGOs to organize awareness-raising events that ultimately reached more than 30,000 people, most of them young people. More than 150 young educators received training in leading these types of sessions.

## Looking ahead

Building on its past achievements, CIDA will continue to play a leadership role in such areas as promoting and protecting human rights (including children's rights and gender equality), supporting quality education for HIV prevention, strengthening health systems, and supporting research and development of vaccines and microbicides and other prevention technologies. In keeping with the Millennium Development Goals, CIDA supports universal access to HIV prevention, care, treatment, and support so that the spread of HIV/AIDS can be halted, and ultimately reversed, by 2015.

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Printed in Canada



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