

HIV and AIDS in Swaziland

To prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and reduce its impact, UNDP Swaziland has mobilized all levels of government and civil society. UNDP advocates for placing HIV/AIDS at the centre of national planning and budgets; helps build national capacity to manage initiatives that include people and institutions not usually involved with public health; and promotes decentralized responses that support community-level action.

UNDP efforts in mobilizing deep awareness, commitment and action are beginning to show at all levels of Swaziland society.

OUTCOMES

In 2004, estimates of HIV prevalence in the country put the Kingdom among the worst affected countries with one of the highest HIV prevalence. However in 2005, Swaziland put more than 17000 of the 31000 people who required ART on treatment. This figure was not only far above the world norm, but also made the Kingdom one of the few countries to meet the WHO 3x5 target. This is one of the most important outcomes of UNDP community communication programmes undertaken since 2002.

Working with NGO's, FBOs and CBO's

Most of UNDP's work with civil society organisations including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), faith based organisations (FBOs) and community based organizations (CBOs) has been through the Community Capacity Enhancement and Community Conversations (CCE-CC). The Community Conversations methodology empowers communities conduct community level dialogues on the role played by social interactions in spread of the HIV virus, and how community strength can be used to prevent infections as well as respond to the impact of the epidemic.

The deep understanding created enables communities to collectively make decisions on social changes necessary to prevent infection, to plan and allocate resources to effectively address the effects of HIV&AIDS.

UNDP has worked with some of the most effective NGOs and strengthened their capacity to deliver community level HIV programmes using the Leadership for Results methodologies. UNDP work has also focused on empowerment of civil society capacity for advocacy for empowerment, human rights and meaningful involvement of people living with HIV&AIDS in the HIV response.

RESULTS:

FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS: Among the difficulties of effectively fighting HIV has been the role played by the Church. A series of community conversation with leaders of the largest church network, the League of Independent Churches revealed deep seated fears of stigma within the church. Church leaders confessed to denial because of the association of HIV and poor sexual morals. After church leaders understood the mode of transmission of HIV and the impact on the community, they have resolved to hold a National Day of Prayer on

October 28 2006 to make a public commitment to respond to HIV and urge their followers to promote prevention of transmission.

COMMUNITY LEADERS: UNDP has worked with local level community leaders including traditional and urban community leaders to promote sub national level community responses against HIV. As a result, almost all communities have established local community centres to support orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs). This is particularly important in the country where 70,000 of the population of 1 million are orphans.

TASC: The AIDS Information Support Centre (TASC) which was one of the first NGOs to work in the HIV and AIDS adopted and integrated the UNDP Community Conversations methodology in the implementation of their programmes at community level. In the Godloza and KaGwegwe area where TASC operated, they and reported significant improvement in levels of awareness and ownership.

NETWORKS OF PLWHA: UNDP supported the formation and worked provided capacity building support for the Swaziland AIDS Support Organization (SASO); the first network of people living with HIV&AIDS (PLWHA) since its 1993. UNDP has also supported the Swaziland National Network of People Living with HIV and AIDS (SWANNEPHA) as an umbrella body for PLWHA since it was established in 2004.

STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION: UNDP has focused its work to counteract and reduce stigma and discrimination. Because of the fear of social stigma and discrimination, most people have been reluctant to know their HIV status. In September 2006, UNDP hosted an open dialogue between civil society, PLWHA and the media to focus national attention on the problem through the media. National media organizations have also committed to develop Editorial Policies to prevent stigma and discrimination through their editorial and advertising output.

UNITED NATIONS VOLUNTEERS

The United Nations Volunteers Programme supports peace and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Swaziland through the promotion of volunteerism, including the mobilization of volunteers.

Under the Swaziland Capacity Initiative (SWACI) which is a framework which calls for a renewed sense of urgency in meeting the capacity needs that will facilitate achievements of the MDGs, the UNV programme has deployed at least ten (10) United Nations volunteer specialists from various professional backgrounds such as Medicine, Management, Agriculture, Local Governance and Development Planning.

Many of these specialists have been engaged in different Ministries such as Education, Health, Public Service and Information, Agriculture, the Prime Minister's Office and other Institutions in Swaziland and have contributed significantly to alleviating the acute Human Resource problems posed by the aids epidemic in this part of Southern Africa.