



Fact sheet

SDC AIDS policy 2002-2007

At the end of 2002, 42 million people were infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Of these, 95% lived in a developing country. UNAIDS warns that by 2020, 68 million people in the 45 most affected countries will die of AIDS if preventive measures are not drastically strengthened and treatment is not broadened.

The epidemic, which is still in the early stages, has not yet stabilized and is spreading in almost all parts of the world. **Africa** is the most seriously affected continent but the epidemic could become even worse in **Asia**. **Eastern Europe and Central Asia** are showing the greatest increase in new infections.

The vicious circle of AIDS and poverty

HIV/AIDS is both a cause and a result of poverty. AIDS exacerbates the exclusion of population groups which are already severely marginalized. Women and children suffer the most. In the worst affected countries, the danger looms that the gross domestic product will decline in the next 20 years by around 40% because of HIV/AIDS and that the results of 50 years of development efforts will be wiped out. In some African countries, the average life expectancy has already dropped to below 40 years.

What is SDC doing?

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, SDC, bases its action on the UN's Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and on the Millennium Development Goals. The SDC is involved in bilateral aid projects and on the multilateral level supports UN organizations and the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

The highest goal of the SDC AIDS policy is to help slow down the spread of HIV/AIDS and to ease the impact of the epidemic. The following points are at the forefront of the strategy:

- **Strengthening skills and capacities:** education and information at the SDC itself and in projects and programs concerning behaviour, measures, problem awareness and new approaches.
- **Promotion of synergies:** using potentials of other programs, exchanging experiences internationally over the Internet, joint training sessions.
- **Multi-sectoral and systemic approach:** AIDS does not affect only the health sector. Education and other measures must also be taken in the finance sector, the economy, the military, in schools, etc.
- **Integration of HIV/AIDS measures** in projects and programs: increase awareness of the problem, draw in other target groups such as AIDS orphans and make a contribution to halting the epidemic and easing the impact.
- **Promotion of applied research.**

Focus of SDC activities:

- In its AIDS policy, as everywhere with the SDC, the poorest population groups are at the center of its work. They are the most affected by the epidemic. The SDC is particularly active on behalf of women and children.

- An above-average percentage of women and girls are affected (58% of new infections in Africa). They are exposed to greater infection risks than men, receive worse treatment and bear the main burden of caring for family members.
- Measures to limit the health, psycho-social and economic impact.
- Preventive measures and the promotion of treatment.
- Enabling access to essential medicines
- The SDC supports the establishment of efficient health systems that benefit the poor. This is an important pre-condition enabling the treatment of people suffering from AIDS.

The priority is on preventive measures which take into account the local context in the partner countries and the type of epidemic. Of central importance is coordination with all actors, particularly with national AIDS programs as well as the involvement of the civil population and AIDS-infected groups. In this connection multilateral and bilateral efforts complement each other as do humanitarian aid measures. The SDC has sharply increased its contribution in the fields of reproductive health and AIDS since the 1990s. It contributes SFr. four million to UNAIDS, of which it is a founding member, and supports also the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (www.sdc-health.ch).

The SDC works to coordinate the activities of Swiss groups which are involved internationally in the area of HIV/AIDS (Specialized platform for HIV/AIDS and international cooperation www.aidsfocus.ch)