

New executive director sets universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support as top priority for UNAIDS

Calls for US\$ 25 billion investment to ensure countries reach 2010 targets

CAPE TOWN / GENEVA 10 February 2009—On his first country visit, the new Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Mr Michel Sidibé outlined his vision and priorities for UNAIDS in the township of Khayelitsha in South Africa.

Speaking to community and political leaders, Mr Sidibé praised the resilience and perseverance of the community working together to achieve goals in the face of incredible challenges. “I wanted to begin my public journey here, where the community response together with government, civil society and key stakeholders lead the way towards universal access in South Africa. Together they are meeting the demand for HIV prevention, treatment, care and support,” said Mr Sidibé.

Sub-Saharan Africa remains the region most heavily affected by HIV worldwide, accounting for two thirds (67%) of all people living with HIV and for three quarters of AIDS deaths in 2007. The nine countries in southern Africa continue to bear a disproportionate share of the global burden—35% of HIV infections and 38% of deaths due to AIDS.

Like other regions of the world, southern Africa is feeling the effects of the global economic crisis. Mr Sidibé stressed the need for follow through on domestic and international investment commitments to meet 2010 country targets.

“We cannot let the economic crisis paralyze us,” said Mr Sidibé. “Stimulus packages and economic adjustments should be made with a human face in mind. A mother should not have to choose between continuing AIDS treatment and feeding her children. We cannot let down the 4 million people on treatment and millions more in need today.”

Most countries have set universal access targets for 2010 that are ambitious and reach real people. For countries to reach the specific targets they have set, an estimated investment of US\$ 25 billion will be required in 2010, which is US\$ 11.3 billion more than is available today.

A new report today released by UNAIDS, *What countries need: Investments needed for 2010 targets* anticipates that nearly one third of the US\$ 25 billion investment will come from domestic sources. Investments from multilateral and bilateral sources are needed for the remaining US\$ 17 billion.

More than US\$ 9 billion will be used for strengthening health systems and an additional US\$ 9 billion will be used for providing HIV-specific health services. The investments needed would also ensure a fully funded Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, an innovative financing mechanism that countries depend on to help fund national AIDS plans.

Countries reaching their 2010 AIDS targets would show dramatic results:

- An estimated 2.6 million new HIV infections will be averted, cutting HIV incidence by nearly 50%.
- 1.3 million deaths in the next two years can be avoided.
- Approximately 6.7 million individuals will be receiving antiretroviral treatment.

- More than 70 million pregnant women will be screened and receive prevention of mother-to-child transmission services.
- HIV prevention programmes will reach 20 million men who have sex with men, 7 million sex workers, 10 million people who inject drugs, and nearly 8.1 billion male and female condoms would be distributed.
- Seven million orphans and vulnerable children would have been supported by social support programmes.

“It will not be easy to close this gap but it is achievable and absolutely necessary if we are to accelerate the pace of the response to the AIDS epidemic,” said Mr Sidibé. “Together we will help save lives—by putting more people on treatment, ensuring that pregnant women receive comprehensive antenatal care including HIV services, and that a whole generation of children will graduate from school.”

The Executive Director also called for greater accountability to make the money work better for people in need. He highlighted the need for programmes to be cost effective, strive to eliminate inefficiencies in service delivery and reduce unit costs. Better aligned and coordinated donor support will also increase the impact of investments.

In a letter to partners also released today, Mr Sidibé wrote that UNAIDS would re-double its efforts in helping countries realize their universal access goals including indicator mapping and targeted country support for countries that might be lagging. The letter also outlines ten areas needed to achieve universal access goals.

1. Deliver results country by country - by setting ambitious targets.
2. Promote the human rights of people living with and affected by HIV - by ending laws that impede delivery and use of AIDS related services.
3. Support political demand for universal access - by strengthening links with civil society and community groups.
4. Invest in research and apply the evidence - by continued investment in pre-exposure prophylaxis, microbicides and vaccines.
5. Prioritize prevention efforts - by making pediatric AIDS history and giving young people skills to protect themselves from HIV and violence.
6. Mobilize the resources countries need - including fully funding the Global Fund.
7. Optimize and expand partnerships - by expanding the partnership platform to bring new partners together.
8. Leverage AIDS responses to deliver broader results for people - revitalize health systems to ensure that people living with HIV do not die of TB and have access to primary health care.
9. Monitor progress - country by country and donor by donor - by ensuring transparency and accountability at all levels.
10. Plan to sustain the gains - by empowering and restoring dignity to communities and families affected by HIV and ensuring sustainable and predictable financing.

Since 2001, there has been substantial progress in delivering HIV services to millions of people, especially in low- and middle-income countries. Today, nearly 4 million people are on antiretroviral treatment. By the end of 2007, the annual number of new HIV infections had fallen to 2.7 million from 3 million in 2005. New infections among children have dropped, thanks to rapid scale up of services to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV. Young people in many parts of the world are waiting longer to become sexually active; having fewer sexual partners; or are using condoms. And millions of children orphaned by AIDS now have access to social support and protection. These gains have to be sustained in these tough economic times.

Contact

Geneva: Sophie Barton-Knott | tel. +41 22 791 1697 | bartonknotts@unaids.org

South Africa: Chiara Frisone | tel. +27 82 880 4729 | frisonec@unaids.org

UNAIDS is an innovative joint venture of the United Nations, bringing together the efforts and resources of the UNAIDS Secretariat and ten UN system organizations in the AIDS response. The Secretariat headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland—with staff on the ground in more than 80 countries. Coherent action on AIDS by the UN system is coordinated in countries through UN theme groups, and joint programmes on AIDS. UNAIDS' Cosponsors include UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank. Visit the UNAIDS Web site at www.unaids.org
