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The HIV & AIDS and STI Strategic Plan for South Africa (NSP 2007-2011)

The primary aims of the NSP are to:

- Reduce the number of new HIV infections by 50%.
- Reduce the impact of HIV and AIDS on individuals, families, communities and society by expanding access to an appropriate package of treatment, care and support to 80% of all people diagnosed with HIV.

In particular young people in the age group 15-24 should be a focus of all the interventions, especially for behaviour change based prevention. The interventions that are needed to reach the aims of the NSP are structured according to the following four key priority areas:

- Prevention;
- Treatment, care and support;
- Monitoring, research and surveillance; and
- Human and rights and access to justice.

The executive summary section outlines the key priority areas, the goals and the identified specific objectives. The section that follows focuses in more detail on the interventions that will be pursued in the next 5 years towards the attainment of these objectives. However, it needs to be understood that these priority areas are a continuum in the response to HIV and AIDS.

Priority Area 1: Prevention

The target is to reduce the national HIV incidence rate by 50% by 2011. Identifying and keeping HIV-negative people negative is the most effective and sustainable intervention in the AIDS response. (The unavailability of incidence-measures is a cause for uncertainty regarding the reliability of monitoring targets in this regard. Monitoring incidence will be informed by modeling work for some time in the NSP period.)

It is thought that as much as 85% of the South African HIV epidemic is caused by heterosexual spread. Vertical transmission from mother-to-child and, less frequently, transmission associated with blood products, account for the rest of the infections. The HIV epidemic is complex and diverse and although not fully understood, is known to be driven by many behavioural, social, and biological factors that both exacerbate and/or facilitate the spread of HIV. It is unlikely that the society will be able to keep up with the demand for health and social services unless there is a significant slowing down in the incidence of newly infected individuals. This situation underscores the central role and importance of HIV prevention.

Priority Area 2: Treatment, Care and Support

The target is to provide an appropriate package of treatment, care and support services to 80% of people living with HIV and their families by 2011 in order to reduce morbidity and mortality as well as other impacts of HIV and AIDS.

Key to meeting these targets are:

- Establishing a national culture in which all people in South Africa regularly seek voluntary testing and counselling for HIV.
- Strengthening the health and other systems so as to create the conditions for universal access to a comprehensive package of treatment for HIV, including antiretroviral therapy, and the integration of HIV and TB care.
- Drawing on and disseminating the growing body of experience and innovation in care, treatment and support strategies across the country, in both public and private sectors.
- Focussing on specific issues and groups: the prevention of mother-to-child transmission, the care of children and HIV-infected pregnant women, and wellness management of people before they become eligible for ART.
- Ensuring the effective implementation of policies and strategies to mitigate the impacts of HIV, in particular orphans and vulnerable children, youth-headed households, and on the health and educational system, as well as support to older people.



Priority Area 3: Research, Monitoring and Surveillance

The NSP 2007-2011 recognises monitoring and evaluation (M&E) as an important policy and management tool. National, provincial and district level indicators to monitor inputs, process, outputs, outcomes and impact will be used to assess collective effort. It is recommended that a sustainable budget of between 4% – 7% of the total HIV and AIDS budget is dedicated for the Monitoring and Evaluation of the NSP in line with international trends.

Priority Area 4: Human Rights and Access to Justice

HIV and AIDS is a human rights issue. A major objective of the NSP is to create a social environment that encourages many more people to test voluntarily for HIV and, when necessary, to seek and receive medical treatment and social support. Respect for, and the promotion of, human rights must be integral to all the priority interventions of the NSP. In addition, active and ongoing campaigns that promote, protect, enforce and monitor human rights must be linked to every intervention and mounted at district, provincial and national level.

The NSP identifies a range of activities to improve access to justice, in order that people can challenge human rights violations immediately and directly. It sets out issues for law reform to create a legal framework that uniformly assists HIV prevention, treatment, research and surveillance.

Youth as a specific target group

Young people are not only the key to South Africa's future, but also the key to whether we meet the goals of the NSP. A key message of the NSP is that one of our greatest challenges is to influence and change the behaviour of young people, particularly those under 24, in order to try to reduce HIV infection in the age group that is most at risk. If this strategy is successful, behaviour change will need to be sustained and monitored as people get older. Also, access to youth-friendly services in clinics and multipurpose centres is key to getting young people involved in HIV and AIDS prevention treatment care and support programmes. The NSP outlines some critical youth specific interventions.