



GOOD NEWS ON HIV and AIDS

HIV and AIDS is devastating millions of lives, destroying countries, and affecting the global economy. About 40.3 million people are infected with HIV and AIDS globally. This includes 2.3 million children under 15. But with education and treatment, it can be stopped. Three countries have made a determined effort to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS and treat those affected – with positive results.

Success in Uganda

When HIV and AIDS first began to spread through sub-Saharan Africa, Uganda was one of the worst affected countries. The disease was first reported in the country in 1982. By the late 1980s, up to 30 percent of the urban population had the disease – one of the highest rates of infection in the world.

Taking action

Back in 1986, many countries were still struggling to come to terms with the implications of the disease. But the Ugandan government took action. It was one of the first countries to work with the World Health Organization to create a national HIV and AIDS control plan.

The Uganda AIDS Commission was set up under the Office of the President. Involving the president directly was a powerful way to get the message across to the Ugandan people. The strategy was to tackle HIV and AIDS by working with a range of groups in the community – including people living with HIV and AIDS.

Next, the Ugandan Government began a widespread campaign to raise awareness about HIV and AIDS and how to prevent it. Prevention was based on the ABC model – Abstinence, Being faithful and Condom use.

A range of activities were promoted, like HIV testing, sex education, counselling, changing behaviours that increased the transmission of the disease and condom distribution. International donors supported the program with funding.

Impressive results

The results of this have been impressive. For example, between 1992 and 1997, rates of HIV and AIDS infection among pregnant women fell by 50 percent.

Rates of condom use have increased and there is evidence that young people are delaying their first sexual experiences by up to two years. The overall infection rate has dropped to a low of about seven percent of the adult population.

From a country that threatened to be overwhelmed by HIV and AIDS, Uganda has fought back and is winning. Many people are still living with HIV and AIDS. There is still more work to be done to reduce the numbers and to care for those with the disease and children left orphaned. But the example of Uganda shows that even very poor countries can reduce the spread of HIV and AIDS, given the resources and the political will.



Brazil and Thailand fight back

There are other success stories in developing countries. Brazil has been providing free anti-retroviral drugs to all people living with HIV and AIDS for many years. Although they do not cure HIV and AIDS, these drugs mean people with the disease can live longer and healthier lives. In Brazil, deaths from AIDS dropped by 40–70 percent between 1996 and 2002, partly due to universal treatment.

In Thailand, HIV and AIDS has been most common in high-risk groups including sex workers. In response, Thailand encouraged 100 percent condom use by sex workers by providing free condoms. It also ran campaigns encouraging men to use condoms if they visited a brothel. This helped to stabilise the country's HIV and AIDS epidemic, reduce infections and stop the disease from spreading to the general population.

Nations unite



Global leaders agree the spread of HIV and AIDS is devastating communities, especially in poor countries. The Global Fund, launched by the United Nations in 2002, aims to raise the massive resources the world needs to fight HIV and AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, but especially HIV and AIDS. Killer diseases like these must be stopped if poor people are to have a fair chance in life.

For you to do

1. What are some of the steps taken by Uganda, Brazil and Thailand that have helped reduce the spread of HIV and AIDS in these countries?

“HIV won’t stop me changing my world,” says HIV positive Olipa in Malawi. The support group she’s started delivers health and awareness messages to people living with HIV and AIDS, their carers and their children.

2. Research the Global Fund (<http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/>) and find out how much money has been committed to HIV and AIDS prevention and treatment. How much has been contributed by different governments?