



HEALTH PROFILE: SENEGAL

HIV/AIDS

| | |
|--|---------------------------|
| Estimated Number of Adults and Children Living with HIV/AIDS (end of 2003) | 74,890 |
| Total Population (2004) | 10,339,000 |
| Adult HIV Prevalence (end of 2003) | 1.5% |
| HIV-1 and HIV-2 Seroprevalence in Urban Areas | |
| Population most at risk for HIV-1 (i.e., sex worker and their clients, patients seeking treatment for sexually transmitted infections, or other persons with known risk factors) | HIV-1 14.2% HIV-2 6.1% |
| Population least at risk (i.e., pregnant women, blood donors, or other persons with no known risk factors) | HIV-1 1.1% HIV-2 0.3% |

Sources: UNAIDS, U.S. Census Bureau.

Although it is one of the poorest countries in the world, with a per capita annual income of less than \$600 in 2003, Senegal is considered one of the world's success stories in HIV prevention. While other sub-Saharan African countries are experiencing the worst epidemics in the world, Senegal has maintained one of the lowest HIV-prevalence levels on the continent, with HIV prevalence stable at under 1% of the adult population since 1997. With a "concentrated" epidemic, the general population in Senegal has remained relatively free of AIDS, though vulnerable populations have significantly higher prevalence; among commercial sex workers, for example, prevalence is around 17%.

Senegal's success at maintaining low overall prevalence has been attributed to the confluence of a number of factors, including strong political leadership, early involvement and leadership among religious leaders, conservative cultural norms regarding sexual practices, and a comprehensive strategic approach implemented early in the epidemic. A widely cited study by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) attributes Senegal's success at maintaining low prevalence among the general population to the country's rapid and consistent implementation of the following measures:

- *Creation of a Safe Blood Supply.* Reinforcement of the national blood supply, which had been systematically tested for syphilis and hepatitis since the 1970s, to prevent HIV transmission through blood transfusions; and the provision of appropriate equipment and personnel trained in HIV testing to regional and national blood banks.
- *Registration and Regular Medical Checkups for Commercial Sex Workers.* Mandatory registration and quarterly health checkups for commercial sex workers allow these individuals to access treatment for curable sexually transmitted infections and provide a means for the dissemination of HIV/AIDS educational materials to this high-risk population.
- *Promotion of Condom Use.* Dissemination of millions of condoms through social marketing programs to the general population and free distribution to high-risk populations such as commercial sex workers, health care patients with sexually transmitted infections, youth, and the military have made condoms widely available. By 1997, condom use among men who have casual sex had risen from virtually zero, at

December 2004



USAID has provided support to Senegal for HIV/AIDS activities since 1987, as the first donor to participate in the country’s efforts to stem HIV/AIDS.

the start of the epidemic, to nearly 70%. A 2001 behavioral surveillance survey found that 99% of registered sex workers used a condom with their most recent non-regular partner.

Senegal’s success at containing HIV/AIDS, widely praised and studied, provides valuable lessons for other countries in the region. Containing the epidemic, however, requires ongoing effort. Challenges to continued success include population movement across borders, high HIV prevalence among commercial sex workers, and the need to reach young people approaching sexual debut.

NATIONAL RESPONSE

Senegal responded rapidly to the first emergence of HIV/AIDS in the mid-1980s, establishing the *Programme National de Lutte contre le SIDA* (National Program for the Fight against AIDS) in 1986, renamed as the *Conseil National de Lutte contre le SIDA* (National Council for the Fight against AIDS) in 2002. The national program quickly undertook significant measures to prevent HIV/AIDS transmission, including condom promotion; sentinel surveillance to determine the scope and spread of the epidemic; confidential counseling and testing; education of sex workers; and integration of HIV into sex education.

From the start of the epidemic, the government worked actively to involve religious and community leaders in HIV/AIDS prevention. In 1995, a national conference resulted in a proclamation of support for HIV prevention activities and a partnership between health care providers and Muslim and Christian religious leaders in the fight against AIDS. This approach combines outreach programs targeting high-risk populations with condom promotion and other prevention efforts, while simultaneously, through the participation of religious leaders and faith-based organizations, reinforcing the traditional sexual norms that have protected Senegal from a widespread HIV/AIDS epidemic. Muslim religious leaders, in particular, have been at the forefront of the national response, preaching about HIV/AIDS in mosques and incorporating AIDS education into religious teaching programs. Both Muslim and Christian organizations provide care and psychosocial services and promote tolerance.

The government’s 2002–2006 strategy continues to emphasize a multisectoral approach that includes the participation of government ministries, the private sector, and religious and civil society organizations, as well as persons living with HIV/AIDS. Priority action areas include prevention, blood safety, sexually transmitted infections, mother-to-child transmission, and social mobilization. A sentinel surveillance survey conducted from late 2004 to early 2005 will provide new information on the state of the epidemic.

USAID SUPPORT

USAID has provided support to Senegal for HIV/AIDS activities since 1987, as the first donor to participate in the country’s efforts to stem HIV/AIDS. Since then, it has spent more than \$25 million to help Senegal keep HIV/AIDS prevalence low. In 2003, USAID provided \$6 million for a range of prevention, care, and support activities:

- *HIV/AIDS Prevention.* USAID supports the ABC (Abstain, Be faithful to one partner, or use Condoms correctly and consistently) approach in activities that focus on the general population as well as high-risk populations such as fishermen, transportation workers, and the wives of migrant workers. Since 1987, USAID has provided more than 50 million condoms for distribution to high-risk populations.
- *Counseling and Testing.* Nine of Senegal’s ten testing and counseling centers were established with USAID support, including both funding and technical assistance. Nearly 5,000 persons used these services in 2003—a 60% increase over 2002.

- *Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission.* USAID supported preparation of the manual used to train health care providers in prevention of mother-to-child transmission. Recommended actions include offering testing to women for HIV as part of regular antenatal care and administering antiretroviral prophylaxis to HIV-positive mothers at the onset of labor and to their infants after birth.
- *Partnership with Religious and Community Leaders.* USAID supported the dialogue with religious leaders during the 1995 national conference. USAID also supports activities that help rural women and youth identify ways to fight HIV/AIDS and maintain their own reproductive health.
- *Care and Support for People Living with HIV/AIDS.* USAID supports the Ambulatory Treatment Center in Dakar, which provides food, medical care, and psychosocial support to people living with HIV/AIDS. These services are provided both at the center and through home visits.
- *Surveillance.* USAID collaborates with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Government of Senegal in building an epidemiological information system to provide data on the spread of the epidemic. A second-generation behavior surveillance survey is being undertaken in 2004–2005.

USAID HIV/AIDS activities are conducted primarily in six regions (Dakar, Fatick, Kaolack, Louga, Tihes, and Ziguichor) in collaboration with a range of public and private partners. Senegal also receives assistance from USAID's West Africa Regional Program that serves 18 countries.

IMPORTANT LINKS AND CONTACTS

USAID HIV/AIDS Web site for Senegal:

http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_health/aids/Countries/africa/senegal.html

USAID/Senegal Web site: <http://www.usaid-sn.org/>

USAID/Senegal, Petit Ngor, B.P. 49, Dakar, Senegal

Tel: 221-869-61-00, Fax: 221-869-61-01

Email: usaid-senegal@usaid.gov

Prepared for USAID by Social & Scientific Systems, Inc., under The Synergy Project

For more information, see http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_health/aids