

# HAITI

## Background

Haiti has the highest HIV adult prevalence rate in Latin America and the Caribbean. The beginning of the epidemic there date from the early 80's and the mode of transmission is mostly heterosexual. The national estimated prevalence rate is 4.5% and could reach 8% by 2010. An estimated 300,000 people are HIV+ and there are about 35,000 new cases each year. As a consequence of the high prevalence HIV/AIDS rate, the tuberculosis situation in Haiti has also deteriorated.

Information, education, prevention and counseling of people living with HIV are subject to numerous difficulties, including literacy problems, widespread poverty and some social exclusion of People Living with HIV/AIDS.

This year, for the first time, the Government of Haiti initiated a strategic planning exercise for responding to HIV/AIDS. During the high-level launch of this initiative, both President Aristide and Prime Minister Cherestal reiterated their commitment to combat HIV/AIDS. They publicly announced that the fight against HIV/AIDS was a top priority of the Government of Haiti. These are major steps towards the development of an efficient, innovative, large scale and multi-sectoral response.

Already, efforts supported by the UN System, NGOs and bilateral partners have resulted in slowing the spread of HIV/AIDS in Haiti. Recent studies have shown that infection rates have not grown as fast as expected. Due to large investments and strong interventions by non-governmental agencies, condom sales have increased and there are indications of some behavior changes as well.

## UNDP's Role

One of the priorities of UNDP efforts as part of UNAIDS has been to focus on convincing Haiti's political leaders to openly acknowledge the problem and its scope and to publicly speak out about the issue. HIV/AIDS is still considered by many to be a taboo topic, but some progress has been made over the last three years on this front.

In line with its on-going Country Cooperation Framework with the Government of Haiti, UNDP will be actively contributing to the above-mentioned on-going strategic planning exercise. As part of this process, UNDP plans to promote a non-partisan national dialogue on the issue of HIV/AIDS, building on the unique experience gained during the Common Country Assessment (CCA) process in terms of participation and facilitation of national dialogue on key national issues.

In parallel to its support to the strategic planning process, UNDP is also working to:

- Strengthen national capacities for generating statistics (through support to the Ministry of Health and the National Statistical Institute), with a particular focus on HIV/AIDS;
- Ensure that the issue of HIV/AIDS is fully taken into account in UNDP-supported poverty and social exclusion national policy/strategy formulation exercises;
- Promote the respect of human rights of People Living with HIV/AIDS. In collaboration with UNV, UNDP has recruited two such People who are now undertaking an extraordinary public education/prevention campaign. They have been the first "public" citizens to speak out for the rights of affected people and are helping to break psychological taboos.
- Support Haiti's inclusion and participation in regional meetings and conferences; and also to support and facilitate for meetings between Haitian and Dominican leaders from both government and civil society organizations.

In coordination with the UNAIDS Secretariat and sister UN agencies, UNDP has also been focusing on public education campaigns in schools and during important cultural moments such as carnival, as well as hosting numerous briefing/press conferences with the media.