

Fatal statistics

It is estimated that, in South Africa, about 500 people a day are infected with the HIV virus. At this rate, nine million people (27 percent of the adult population) could be infected with HIV by the year 2010. But if strong AIDS prevention and education programmes are set up, this number could be cut down to 7 million (19 percent of the adult population).

This government is not doing enough to slow down the spread of AIDS. The new South African government will have to do much more if it wants to bring down the HIV infection rate by the year 2005, says Mbulelo Bungane, National Director of the National Progressive Primary Health Care Network's (NPPHCN) National AIDS Programme.

The first AIDS case in South Africa was reported in 1983. Since then, more than one million people (about three percent of the adult population) are estimated to be infected with HIV, the virus which causes AIDS.

Bungane says the amount of care and support for people with AIDS in government institutions is very disappointing.

The government health services send people with AIDS to the National AIDS Programme for counselling. He believes the government must train more counsellors to help the increasing numbers of HIV-infected people. He is annoyed that there is no national plan to care for these people.

Bungane slammed political parties that are only interested in getting votes and do not pay enough attention to the AIDS problem and other health issues.

He believes the new government must play a central role in preventing the spread of AIDS and caring for people with the disease. The new government must also put more money and resources into the fight against AIDS. At the same time, it must support AIDS work which

Do more about AIDS!

Millions of lives could be saved – but only if the new South African government sets up a strong AIDS education and prevention programme, Mbulelo Bungane (right) of the National AIDS programme told SPEAK



is being done in different communities.

Educating the public and spreading information on AIDS and other sexually transmitted disease (STDs) — especially in communities where AIDS is spreading fastest — is one of the main strategies of any HIV prevention programme.

“The whole education system should be changed so that AIDS and other issues relating to sex are included in the subjects taught at school. We would like to see a national plan to do this, even before we enter the new South Africa. Teenagers should be taught the social skills needed to prevent HIV infection,” says Bungane.

The main problem in the fight against AIDS is that most people still think AIDS is not their problem, it only happens to other people.

“Our aim is to educate and convince everyone that AIDS

could happen to them. It is important that people take personal responsibility and adopt safer sexual practices to ensure a healthy new South Africa,” said Bungane.

One of the best ways to practice safe sex is by using condoms. However, many people still do not want to use condoms.

Bungane believes political parties should help change people’s ideas and attitudes to condoms and contraceptives. “Besides person to person education and education through TV, radio and newspapers, politicians should talk openly about the promotion of safer sex to encourage people to change their sexual behaviour,” he says.

An important factor in the spread of AIDS is the women’s position of weakness in a male-controlled society. It is difficult for women to protect themselves against AIDS

if their men refuse to use condoms. Women need to have more power over their sexual lives.

The NPPHCN National AIDS programme is the only organisation in South Africa that devotes all its resources to AIDS work. It has 12 regional offices across the country and 84 full-time community workers who have the responsibility of making sure AIDS education is part of other community activities. ★

The PPHC National AIDS Programme helps communities fight ignorance about AIDS. If you need the support of a community worker or if you have any further questions contact the PPHC National AIDS Programme. The telephone numbers of their offices are:

National office: (011) 337 8539

Eastern Transvaal:
(01315) 41 181

Northern Transvaal:
(01521) 91 4221

Southern Transvaal:
(011) 337 7126

Orange Free State:
(057) 396 5509

Natal: (031) 301 2582

Natal Midlands: (0331) 45 0453

Northern Natal: (0354) 74 181

Border: (0431) 43 6733

Eastern Cape: (041) 41 1618

Transkei: (0471) 31 0757

Western Cape: (021) 696 4154



Action against AIDS: Staff of NPPHCN's National AIDS Programme at a workshop

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