



## Decreasing morbidity and mortality

The AIDS Strategy is a national plan and its implementation involves a range of government departments, local authorities and civil society structures. Oversight of and direction for the national AIDS programme is provided by an Inter-Ministerial Committee chaired by the Presidency. However, the Health Department plays a key role in providing technical guidance and in co-ordinating implementation.

### Priority Area 1: Preventing HIV infection

This priority area involves social mobilisation to increase public awareness of HIV/AIDS; information, education and communication strategies; condom distribution; effective management of sexually transmitted diseases; ensuring blood safety; promoting voluntary testing and counselling; and exploring viable interventions to reduce mother-to-child transmission of HIV. Progress on the prevention front in 2000/1 included:

#### Social mobilisation

In July 2000, the 13th International AIDS Conference took place in Durban — the first African venue for the event. Not only were 4 000 out of the 12 300 delegates from Africa, but the concerns of our continent and other developing countries were imprinted on the programme. This, too, stood in contrast to previous conferences where the challenges of HIV/AIDS in the developed world dominated proceedings.

The South African National AIDS Council (SANAC), a top-level advisory structure, was established by the President shortly before the period covered by this report. It comprises 16 Government representatives (14 Ministers plus two Members of Parliament) and 16 representatives of sectors in civil society. In addition to its advisory role SANAC is a high profile instrument of social mobilisation. During 2000/1, five technical task teams were set up to support SANAC.

The Department, through the Government AIDS Action Programme, facilitated a number of sectoral summits, to consult on and produce specific strategies for those sectors and to deepen civil society participation. The sectors involved included business, sport, hospitality, non-governmental organisations and traditional leaders.

#### Information, education and communication

##### Beyond Awareness Campaign

The bulk of the Department's communication and information output on HIV/AIDS has taken place under the banner of the Beyond Awareness Campaign and has been contracted through two successive tenders to the private sector. The second Beyond Awareness Campaign tender was drawing to a close at the end of this financial year. Its achievements are recorded in the box on Page 25.

#### Schools life skills programme

The life skills programme in schools kicked off as a major prevention initiative more than five years ago. This year the programme repositioned itself as the core element in the Integrated Plan for Children and Youth Infected and Affected by HIV/AIDS, an approach that spans prevention and care. The other major elements in the plan, approved by Cabinet in November 1999 and specially funded for three years, are:

- Developing and testing models for community-based care for people living with HIV/AIDS and their families, including strategies for the care of orphans.
- Strengthening the capacity for voluntary counselling and testing for HIV.

In 2000/1 an amount of R75-million was set aside for the Integrated Plan.



## Condom distribution

The quantity of free condoms supplied by Government to promote safe sexual behaviour increases yearly. In the period under review the quantity ordered was 250-million. Effective distribution and adequate quality control are constant challenges.

- A Barrier Methods Task Force has been created to provide technical advice and guide policy making on the supply of male and female condoms and microbicides.
- Major improvements in quality assurance of the male condom were achieved by batch testing through the South African Bureau of Standards.
- An information system to manage the logistics of condom distribution was created and all provinces have persons trained in its use.

The aim is to ensure that shortages of condoms that have been reported in the past do not recur.

## Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

The halving of syphilis prevalence over the past two years (established through the antenatal surveillance system) attests to considerable success. But other STIs have not shown a similar decline. The internationally successful syndromic approach to STI management is widely used in public sector health services and 80% of clinics have at least one health worker recently trained in this approach.

## Beyond Awareness II

The Beyond Awareness Campaign was a state-funded initiative to promote and support action around HIV/AIDS through communication. The tender, for R26-million, covered 1999 and 2000 and went to a consortium comprising AIDS Media Research Project, DramAidE, Lindsay Smithers FCB and Wireless Active.

### What it did

- Mass media advertising to market the red ribbon and AIDS Helpline and to promote safer sex and acceptance of people living with HIV/AIDS.
- Established an Aids Action Office that developed and distributed batches of leaflets, posters, booklets, stickers and campaign items to government services and NGOs. More than 25-million items were distributed in two years.
- Radio training for community radio and SABC producers.
- A Tertiary Institutions Project that involved mobilising students through workshops, provincial summits and a national conference.
- The AIDS Memorial Quilt Project in which thousands of participants, including many who had lost loved ones to AIDS, created quilts as living

memorials and a way to building openness about HIV.

- Social research into HIV/AIDS awareness among the youth and reported sexual behaviour.

### What it achieved

- It boosted the AIDS Helpline's calls by 320%.
- It contributed to high uptake of free condoms (250-million in 2000/1).
- It expanded the quilt project hugely.
- It documented social factors that shape teenage responses to HIV/AIDS.

### What others thought of it

An independent evaluation concluded the campaign was "competent, accurate and well-managed". Suggested improvements? Better integration of future communication contracts into the HIV/AIDS Programme, improved reach into poorer, rural communities and a clearer focus on AIDS care.

