



**South Africa - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 14 October 2009**

**Information on access to medical care in South Africa for those who are HIV positive.**

In a section titled 'Treatment for AIDS in South Africa', *Avert* states:

"South Africa has the largest antiretroviral therapy programme in the world, but given it also has the world's largest epidemic, access to treatment is low. At the end of 2007, an estimated 28% of infected people were receiving treatment for HIV, below the average across lower- and middle-income countries.

The state of HIV treatment in South Africa is disappointing and can only be seen in the context of years of doubting the effectiveness of treatment at the highest levels of government, and the delay and slow pace of delivering a public ARV programme." (*Avert* (12 October 2009) *HIV and AIDS in South Africa*)

In a section titled 'Right to health – people living with HIV and AIDS' the 2009 *Amnesty International Report* for south Africa states :

"An estimated 5.7 million people were living with HIV. In July the national Department of Health stated that 500,000 AIDS patients were receiving antiretroviral treatment (ART) at 409 accredited facilities. The numbers on ART had risen to 550,000, according to the new Minister of Health in October. There remained a wide treatment gap however. In June the government's progress report to the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV and AIDS acknowledged that 58 per cent of those clinically needing ART were not receiving it. Severe staffing shortages in the public sector, disruptions in supply of the drugs, slow progress in decentralizing services for poor, rural communities, gender-based discrimination and poor political leadership contributed to this treatment gap. Some provinces, though, such as KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and the Free State, increased the number of decentralized facilities accessible to patients unable to afford transport costs." (*Amnesty International* (28 May 2009) *Amnesty International Report 2009 - South Africa*)

The *Freedom House* 2009 Freedom in the World report for South Africa states:

"Some 5.5 million South Africans, about 12 percent of the population, are infected with HIV/AIDS. Mbeki's government, which voiced skepticism about the link between HIV and AIDS, had resisted making antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) available through the public health system; a 2008 Harvard University study claimed that 330,000 people had died between 2000 and 2005 as a

result. By 2003, international and domestic pressure had spurred the government to begin working toward universal ARV treatment. In December 2008, the new government announced an effort to increase the availability of ARVs; some 300,000 South Africans were being treated with the drugs by year's end." (Freedom House (16 July 2009) *Freedom in the World 2009 - South Africa*)

The *United Kingdom Home Office* in their June 2009 Operational Guidance Note for South Africa notes:

"There are an estimated 5.7 million HIV infected individuals in South Africa. 18.1% of the 15-49 year old population is infected, and in parts of the country more than 35% of women of childbearing age are infected. Overall, 11.8% of the population is infected. About 1,000 new infections occur each day, and approximately 350,000 AIDS-related deaths occur annually. A 2007-11 national strategic plan provides the structure for a comprehensive response to HIV and AIDS, including a national rollout of ARV therapy. Overall, 30% of those who need it are currently on ARV therapy." (United Kingdom Home Office (11 June 2009) *Operational Guidance Note – South Africa*)

A September 2009 *IRIN News* reports states:

"More than four million people globally are now on antiretroviral (ARV) treatment - a 10-fold jump in five years - but this is still less than half the people living with HIV who need it.

A new report, *Towards Universal Access*, was released on 30 September by the World Health Organization (WHO), UNAIDS and the UN Children's Agency (UNICEF), and is the third annual review of international progress towards the Millennium Development Goal of universal access to treatment and prevention by 2010.

At the end of 2007 about three million people were receiving life-prolonging ARV medication; in 2008 there was a 36 percent increase in people accessing treatment.

Dr Stella Anyangwe, the WHO country representative in South Africa, told journalists at a press conference that the biggest gains in providing treatment had been made in sub-Saharan Africa, the worst-affected region, and about 2.9 million people were now on ARVs, compared to about 2.1 million in 2007.

South Africa and Zimbabwe are among the countries that made the most progress in putting people on treatment in 2008, with both countries registering an increase of more than 50 percent from 2007 to 2008." (IRIN News (30 September 2009) *GLOBAL: The bumpy road to universal ARV access*)

A further *IRIN News* report from September 2009 adds:

"South Africa's antiretroviral (ARV) treatment programme has been pushed into crisis by poor budgeting decisions, financial mismanagement and a lack of monitoring and evaluation of HIV programmes.

Rapid expansion of the ARV programme in 2008 slowed significantly in 2009, said Mark Heywood of the AIDS Law Project, one of 11 organizations making up the newly formed Budget and Expenditure Monitoring Forum (BEMF).

Forty percent of HIV-positive people in need of treatment were still not getting it, and "sustained access to treatment is now under threat" Heywood told journalists in Johannesburg on 22 September." (IRIN News (22 September 2009) *SOUTH AFRICA: Budgeting failures threaten ARV programme*)

## References:

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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