

PRESS STATEMENT

UNAIDS welcomes South Africa's groundbreaking National Sex Worker HIV Plan

Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa launches a comprehensive plan to prevent and treat HIV among sex workers

GENEVA, 11 March 2016—UNAIDS welcomes the roll-out of South Africa's National Sex Worker HIV Plan, 2016–2019. Launched by the Deputy President of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, in his role as the Chairperson of the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC), this unique plan will ensure equitable access to health and legal services for sex workers in South Africa.

Sex workers experience a disproportionate burden of HIV, sexually transmitted infections, tuberculosis, violence, and stigma and discrimination. This progressive plan outlines a comprehensive and nationally coordinated response that is tailored to their specific needs and includes a core package of services for sex workers, their partners, their clients and their families.

As well as delivering access to health services to prevent and treat HIV, sexually transmitted infections and tuberculosis, the plan also aims to provide sex workers with access to justice and legal protection services. These services will be made available through a combination of peer educators, community-driven outreach and referrals, and specialized clinics, as well as through primary health-care clinics, with training for all health workers.

The plan includes making HIV testing available and accessible for sex workers. Sex workers who test HIV-positive will be offered antiretroviral therapy. Sex workers who are HIV-negative will be offered antiretroviral medicines to prevent HIV infection—pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)—in combination with other HIV prevention services.

“South Africa continues to lead and innovate,” said UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé. “By listening to sex workers and collaborating with the community, South Africa's tailor-made national HIV plan offers real hope for sex workers, who are often left behind in the AIDS response.”

The results of the Integrated Biological and Behavioural Surveillance survey, launched alongside the report today, demonstrate that HIV prevalence among female sex workers can be as high as 72% in South Africa, but with marked variation in prevalence between different urban settings. Furthermore, the study shows that uptake of antiretroviral therapy by female sex workers already know to be living with HIV is lower than the national average. In 2013, a rapid size estimation study commissioned by SANAC estimated that there were approximately 153 000 sex workers (female, male and transgender) in South Africa; most live and work in the main cities. Studies indicate that HIV prevalence among female sex workers is three to four times higher than among adult women in the general population.

Comprehensive HIV combination prevention, treatment and care services need to reach people who are at higher risk. Ending the AIDS epidemic relies on leaving nobody behind.

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UNAIDS

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. UNAIDS unites the efforts of 11 UN organizations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank—and works closely with global and national partners towards ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. Learn more at unaids.org and connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).