

UNAIDS RESPONSE TO KENYAN HIV PREVALENCE SURVEY

Geneva, 13 January 2004 – Last week's news reports claiming that UNAIDS and WHO HIV/AIDS estimates are "overestimated" are unfounded. The reports cite a preliminary report of the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey, which tested 3,000 households. UNAIDS welcomes the new data from the Kenyan survey. UNAIDS and WHO use all available data, including both household surveys and antenatal surveys involving pregnant women, to arrive at the best possible estimates of levels and trends in the HIV/AIDS epidemic. UNAIDS views both types of surveys as complementary and useful in helping to estimate the number of people living with HIV in a country.

The Kenyan survey found a lower HIV prevalence among Kenyans – 6.7% compared to 9.4% estimated by UNAIDS and WHO for 2003. However, when broken down by gender, the survey found an HIV prevalence of 8.7% among women, which is in the same range as the 9.4% prevalence estimated by UNAIDS and WHO. However, it also found an HIV prevalence of 4.5% among men, significantly lower than expected. The reason for this difference is not clear. The male prevalence rate may have been biased by their absence from the household or their refusal to participate. Although household surveys have the advantage of including men and non-pregnant women and include more rural sites, a common problem of such surveys is the low participation rate. For example, in this study, 30% refused testing.

UNAIDS, WHO and its partners, including national AIDS programmes and research institutions, continue to work with countries and experts to improve data collection. These efforts will ensure that the best possible estimates are available to assist governments, NGOs and others in gauging the status of the epidemic and monitoring the effectiveness of their AIDS prevention and care efforts.

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