



Health, Education, Social Protection

HIV and health

The challenge

Worldwide, around 33 million people are living with HIV and AIDS. Every minute, about five people are newly infected with the virus. Southern Africa is the worst affected region, and the virus is spreading rapidly in Eastern Europe and parts of Asia. The epidemic affects all sectors of society and is an obstacle to development in countries with high infection rates.

Treatment with HIV drugs that slow the progression of the disease has been greatly expanded in recent years. However, the number of new infections is still significantly higher than the number of people starting treatment. As the epidemic differs greatly between regions and is also constantly changing, the measures to control HIV need to be adapted to each particular context.

The impact of the epidemic on individuals and households is significant. Health systems are under the dual strain of high patient numbers combined with a shortage of staff and resources. People living with HIV are subjected to significant discrimination the world over, which results in the disregard of the rights of the people concerned. Discrimination therefore, is an impediment to effective control of the epidemic.

Our approach

The focus of our work is to prevent new infections through comprehensive prevention programmes. We use different approaches and methods, adapted to the local context. At the same time, GIZ is actively engaged in improving treatment and care, supporting those affected and reducing stigmatisation and discrimination.

We must take the fight against HIV beyond health care systems into all areas of society. This includes supporting HIV workplace programmes and introducing the topic into

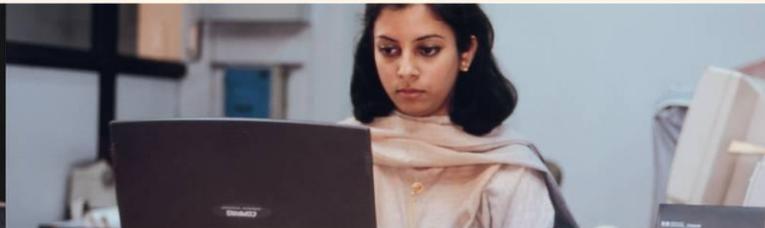
school curricula. In the fight against HIV, GIZ operates at various levels of society. We advise ministries and national HIV commissions, we assist provincial and district governments, and we work closely with affected groups. All relevant stakeholders are engaged in our work. A further aim of our activities is to strengthen the capacities of non-state actors and the private sector.

GIZ links its actions to combat HIV to the strengthening of health systems and the promotion of women's health and maternal health. GIZ takes particular account of the needs of vulnerable groups. The aim is to ensure that all sectors of society have access to HIV services. The respective needs of women and men are also differentiated in our daily work.

Our services

GIZ offers a broad range of services relating to HIV and health. We assist major multisectoral programmes at national level, we provide advice to our partners, and we assist countries in accessing global sources of finance for the fight against AIDS.

- **Strengthening state and society for an effective national response to HIV:** We advise our partners on how to adjust to the problems of HIV and successfully combat HIV with the involvement of various sectors of society – for example the health sector, education and the private sector.
- **Targeted advisory services:** We have particular experience in specific thematic areas. These include taking account of the gender-specific needs in fighting the epidemic, assuring the quality of measures, innovative prevention methods, harm reduction among drug addicts, promoting the exchange of ideas and experience via knowledge hubs, and partnerships between German clinics and hospitals in partner countries.



- **Access and effective implementation of Global Fund grants:** Via the German BACKUP Initiative, GIZ supports governmental and non-governmental partner organisations to access and effectively use grants from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

The benefits

A decreasing number of new HIV infections, a longer and healthier life for persons infected with HIV and improved health system capacities – all these help to enhance social cohesion, improve the economic environment in a society and mitigate the devastating impact of the epidemic on people, households and communities. Many people can be protected from impoverishment and from losing their partner or parents prematurely. Alongside HIV control, the commitment to gender equity and the participation of vulnerable groups in decision-making processes also serve to promote human rights.

An example from the field

People living with HIV are important actors in the fight against the epidemic. In Cameroon, about five per cent of adults are living with the virus. Although the country is severely affected by the HIV epidemic, in 1994 only one organisation existed for people concerned. As a result of the support and advice provided by GIZ on behalf of BMZ, the number of such organisations has grown to 73. Moreover, the organisations have joined together to form a national network.

Today these numerous groups offer psychological and social support, HIV testing, counselling and prevention campaigns, and they organise patient care, including care at home. Through the national network the organisations are now involved at all levels in policy-making and decision-making processes. Their representatives sit, for example, on the AIDS councils, which are responsible for implementing the national HIV strategy.

The impact and success of GIZ's work are widely apparent: people living with HIV are actively helping to shape the response. The services provided by groups of affected people have improved the quality of life of people living with HIV. As a result of the counselling that accompanies voluntary HIV testing, the suicide rate after a positive test result has decreased substantially. The groups of affected persons and their network are powerful advocates for the rights of the people concerned. By means of effective public relations work, they are able to reduce stigmatisation and discrimination and significantly improve access to HIV drugs through lower prices.

Moreover, people living with HIV also benefit from the support of affected groups: medication compliance for drugs to treat HIV and concomitant infections has improved significantly.

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