

Middle-East and North Africa

Overview

- An estimated 68 000 people newly acquired HIV in 2006, bringing to 460 000 the total number of people living with the virus in the region. Around 36 000 people died of AIDS-related illnesses in the Middle-East and North Africa in 2006.
- Most reported HIV infections have been in men, but the proportion of women becoming infected is increasing.
- Uneven (and, in many places, inadequate) HIV surveillance systems make it difficult to gauge precisely the patterns and trends of the epidemics in many countries of this region—especially among most-at-risk groups such as injecting drug users, sex workers and men who have sex with men.
- Improved data collection in some countries (such as **Algeria**, **Iran**, **Libya** and **Morocco**) show that localized HIV epidemics exist across the region, while a generalized epidemic persists in **Sudan**.
- It is estimated that some 75 000 people in the region are in need of antiretroviral therapy, but only 4000 were receiving it at the end of 2005.

Country developments

- **Sudan** has by far the biggest epidemic in this region. Adult HIV prevalence was 1.6% in 2005 and some 350 000 people were living with the virus. Knowledge of HIV in **Sudan** is extremely poor; only 2% of men surveyed knew that condoms can prevent HIV transmission. One study found that HIV prevalence was 9.3% among men who have sex with men in Khartoum State.
- High levels of HIV infection have been found among the estimated 137 000 people who inject drugs in **Iran**. Almost one in four (23%) people who inject drugs participating in a recent study in the Iranian capital, Tehran, were found to be living with HIV.
- Studies have shown that as many as four in ten people who inject drugs in **Algeria**; five in ten in **Egypt** and **Morocco**; and six in ten in **Lebanon** have shared syringes.
- Unprotected sex (including during paid sex and sex between men) is also a major factor in the region's epidemics. HIV infections levels of 9%-10%, 2.2% and 4.4% have been found among female sex workers in Saida and Tamanrasset in **Algeria**; and **Morocco** and **Sudan** respectively.

Contact

Yasmine Topor | UNAIDS Geneva | tel. +41 22 791 3501 | topory@unaids.org

Sophie Barton-Knott | UNAIDS Geneva | tel. +41 22 791 1697 | bartonknotts@unaids.org