



SWEDEN'S COMPREHENSIVE
RESPONSE TO HIV AND AIDS

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Sweden's domestic and international HIV and AIDS work is guided by an integrated, rights-based approach that uses the expertise and capacities of many different sectors and stakeholders in the fight against the pandemic. Sweden's domestic initiatives are guided by the *National Strategy Against HIV/AIDS and Certain Other Contagious Diseases* from 2005/2006. *The Right To a Future - Policy for Sweden's International HIV and AIDS Efforts*, adopted in 2008, guides Sweden's international work.

HIV PREVENTION WORK IN SWEDEN

The spread of HIV and AIDS in Sweden has been relatively stable, with a slow increase of reported cases during the last five years, and approximately 9,000 cases has been reported since the start of the epidemic. Today, almost 5000 people are living with HIV in Sweden. The domestic epidemic has been driven mainly by men who have sex with men, MSM. In 2007, the incidence among injecting drug users, IDU, peaked. Since 2002, the majority of new cases are reported among the immigrant populations.

National prevention strategy

Sweden's domestic prevention work, governed by the *National Strategy Against HIV/AIDS and Certain Other Contagious Diseases*¹ is advised by the National HIV Council and has three main objectives:

- By 2016, halve the number of newly registered cases of HIV transmitted in Sweden;
- Asylum seekers and newly arrived close relatives of previous immigrants must be offered testing and counselling within two months of arrival. The same services must be offered within six months to other groups of people who have stayed in high endemic areas;
- Knowledge about HIV and AIDS and what it is like living with the disease must be improved in the public sector, in working life and society as a whole.

The strategy puts a special focus on vulnerable prevention groups such as MSM, IDU and newly arrived migrants. Efforts targeting the general population are mainly preventive interventions for youth and young adults through schools and youth clinics.

The strategy emphasizes an integrated response from all relevant sectors, including health, education, social welfare, prison and probation services and migration services, which take part in the National HIV Council. The strategy requires close cooperation and coordination between sectors, government bodies and non-governmental organisations, NGOs, working in the field of HIV prevention. More than 50 NGOs participate in HIV prevention work in Sweden.

Sexual rights a key component

Sweden's HIV prevention work incorporates a rights-based approach with an emphasis on sexual rights, such as the right to decide if, when, how and with whom to have sex. Sexual rights are human rights and essential for effective HIV prevention. Everyone regardless of gender, ethnic background, age, sexual orientation or disability has the right to appropriate information about their own body and sexuality and access to services.

¹ For an English summary, see www.socialstyrelsen.se



Download the UNGASS Country Progress Report 2010 from www.socialstyrelsen.se

Equal rights to sexual and reproductive health services, access to protection, testing, voluntary counselling, treatment and support are essential for successful prevention.

Recognizing sexual rights means adapting services to different needs. For example, sexual rights ensure access to protection and adequate voluntary counselling for LGBT persons. The right to information about HIV and protection against HIV is for example guaranteed in the mandatory sexuality education provided in schools.

Domestic programs for prevention groups

Youth and young adults

Schools and youth clinics are cornerstones in prevention work targeting youth and young adults. This is complemented by NGO-run projects such as the Colour of Love campaign, and at some locations in collaboration with county councils. This out-reach campaign targets young people who have finished school in a variety of settings, such as festivals. Community-based youth clinics, run primarily by the county councils, specialize in youth sexuality and SRHR issues. They provide easy access to voluntary counselling and testing, contraceptives and answers to health-related questions.

During 2009/2010 teachers have access to special training that provides the most updated methods and materials on sexuality education for preventive purposes. Several county councils also offer specific trainings to meet this need. Teacher training is often held in conjunction with training on gender and rights issues.

Men having sex with men

Information targeting MSM is channelled mainly through websites and various outreach initiatives run by NGOs connected to the LGBT movement and people living with HIV, PLHIV, organisations.

Specialized HIV and STI clinics offer voluntary counselling and testing for MSM in the metropolitan areas. For more than 20 years, "Venhälsan" at Stockholm South General Hospital has provided comprehensive counselling and testing services. The development of the HIV prevention targeting MSM found a self-evident place within the gay movement. The prevention work also contributed to the strengthening of today's Swedish LGBT-movement's work for sexual rights.

Injecting drug users

IDUs are targeted by community programs and through the public health care system. Special programs have been developed to reach IDUs within prison and probation services. Since 2006, county councils may initiate needle-and-syringe exchange programs.

Migrants

Newly arrived migrants are offered health check-ups, HIV and TB testing, and voluntary counselling through the County Councils' health program for migrants. Today it is estimated that 60 percent of asylum-seekers are reached. A challenge is to develop new, effective strategies and methods to reach different ethnic groups.

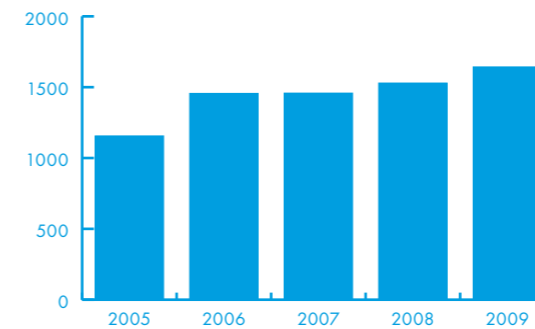
Main channels to provide information about HIV and STIs is through the educational system for newly arrived migrants, SFI, and through a variety of NGOs.

SWEDEN'S INTERNATIONAL WORK WITH HIV AND AIDS

HIV and AIDS are complex challenges that impact large sections of the societies affected by the pandemic. This hampers social and economic development and undermines development progress already achieved. In many countries HIV and AIDS is a general threat to development, not an isolated health problem.

The Right To a Future - Policy for Sweden's International HIV and AIDS Efforts aims to reduce vulnerability to HIV and AIDS and create the best possible conditions for affected groups. The focus of the policy is to prevent the spread of HIV and to deal with its long term effects.

In total MSEK, Swedish Crowns



Swedish support to international HIV and AIDS efforts

Many different actors needed to put words into action

Sweden's policy for international HIV and AIDS efforts is implemented through cooperation strategies on the national, regional and global levels. It also serves as a framework for Sweden's efforts in international policy development and standard setting. The policy calls for an active commitment from many different actors, public, private and NGOs, in Sweden and in the countries affected by the pandemic.

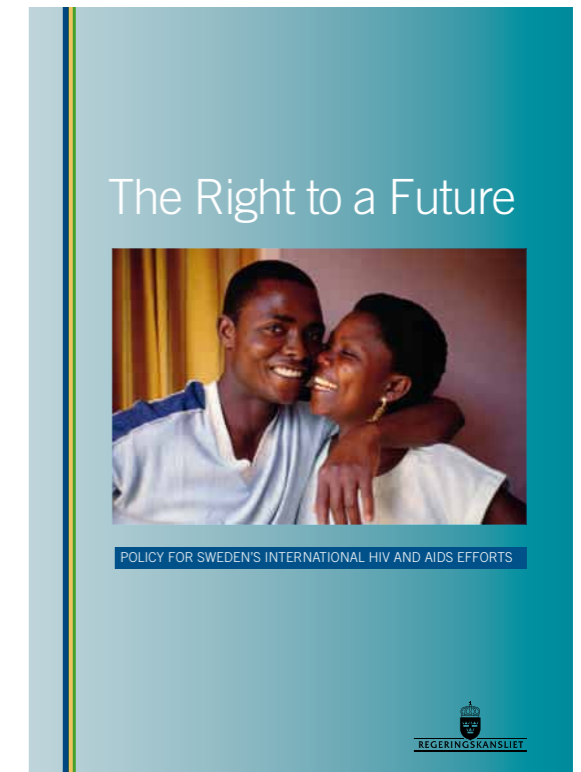
The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida, plays a key role in the implementation of Sweden's international HIV and AIDS policy.

MULTILATERAL AND BILATERAL SUPPORT

Through development contributions Sida makes resources available to governments and various organisations, associations, research institutions, businesses and agencies in their HIV and AIDS work. Most of Sida's support is channelled to Sub-Saharan

Africa, the region that has been the most hard hit by the pandemic. Sida helps strengthen health systems in low-income countries through support to HIV and AIDS programs and health sectors, in general.

A large portion of Sweden's support is channelled through a variety of multilateral agencies and funding mechanisms, such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, GFATM, and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, UNAIDS. HIV and AIDS require a multisectoral response and Sweden, therefore, supports UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP, WHO and other organisations in their work on HIV and AIDS. In all these organisations Sweden is not only a financial contributor but also an active dialog partner and member of the governing bodies. Organisations with a focus on human rights, human rights conventions and other global agreements are also of critical value in the fight against the epidemic.



Download the policy from www.regeringen.se

A rights-based approach to HIV prevention

Discrimination and human rights violations influence the spread of HIV and prevent people from having access to care and treatment. People living with HIV often face stigma and discrimination. They are excluded from participating in the life of their communities and denied equal opportunities. By guaranteeing people their human rights – civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural – they will become less vulnerable to HIV and AIDS.

EXAMPLES OF PREVENTIVE WORK IN SWEDEN

The Colour of Love

The Colour of Love is an outreach campaign targeting youths. The campaign is planned and carried out nationally by 3 major NGOs that visit events, hold talks and hand out information on safe sex, HIV and STIs.

STI-clinics for MSM

MSM in Stockholm, Malmö and Gothenburg are able to receive counselling and testing for HIV and other STIs at clinics specialised in sexual health for MSM.

Regional networks for prevention

In order to strengthen the regional preventive work, six competence networks have been established. These networks participate in the education of teachers and health care workers, and in the development of preventive methods.

Immigrant health

Asylum seekers and refugees in Sweden are offered confidential and voluntary counselling and health check-ups, including HIV and TB testing. If tested positive, they are offered treatment and support.

SOME OF THE SWEDISH SUPPORT IS DIRECTED TO:

Strengthening the voice of people living with HIV in Honduras

PLHIV belonging to ethnic minorities, LGBT groups or sex workers often face multiple discrimination and stigma. The National AIDS Forum, supported by Sida, has been instrumental in strengthening the voices of vulnerable groups and in promoting human rights, participation and gender equality.

Promoting sexuality education in Latin America

Sida supports sexuality education in Latin America and the Caribbean through the Pan American Health Organisation. In 2008, education and health ministers in the region signed the Mexico City Declaration on Sex Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, which sets ambitious goals to implement comprehensive sexuality education and sexual health promotion strategies in the countries.

Providing access to female condoms in Nigeria

The Universal Access to Female Condoms program, UAFC, aims to make female condoms accessible, available and affordable for women and men in developing countries through advocacy, female condom programming and research and development.

Addressing sexual and gender-based violence in DRC

The Reproductive Health, Access, Information and Services in Emergencies initiative, RAISE, aims to improve the quality of and access to SRHR services for women in the Democratic Republic of Congo. RAISE includes support to victims of sexual and gender-based violence through clinical management and referral systems.

Improving access to services for MSM in Russian Federation

The La Sky – Trusting Each Other project in the Russian Federation works to improve access to and availability of medical services, including HIV services, for MSM. Human rights advocacy and the promotion of tolerance toward gay people and MSM is also part of the program.

Fighting spread of HIV in Greater Mekong transport corridors

The Asian Development Bank's HIV and AIDS Trust Fund supports projects targeting at-risk environments in the transport corridors of the Greater Mekong Subregion. Information-sharing, training and condom provision take place at construction sites and in bars with sex workers as a specific target group.

Changing ideas of masculinity

Young men as equal partners, YMEP, works to change ideas of masculinity in Africa. Reduced involvement in gender based violence, higher levels of condom use and decreased pregnancy rates are some of the positive results of the project, which target young people in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

Supporting research to develop an HIV vaccine

Initiated in the 1980s, Sida support has played a catalytic effect to develop and harness HIV and AIDS research in Sweden and in Tanzania, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Collaboration between researchers in Tanzania and Sweden has led to the joint development of an HIV vaccine now on Phase II clinical trial.

Successful prevention efforts require that stigma and discrimination are reduced and that openness is promoted at all levels of society.

Gender equality key in HIV prevention

Gender inequality is a main contributing factor in HIV transmission, especially in the generalised epidemics. Therefore, many programs supported by Sweden focus on underlying power relations between women and men. Through Sida, Sweden supports initiatives that empower women and girls as well as involve men and boys in issues related to sexual and reproductive health. A number of programmes focus on prevention of gender-based violence.

Key populations at risk

Key populations at risk are often marginalised in society and are seldom reached by prevention programmes. Key populations at risk must be made visible and have access to support. These include LGBT persons, people who sell or exchange sex for money or commodities, IDUs and people, particularly children, who live on the street. Migrant workers and refugees are other populations that are vulnerable. Globally, most of these people face extreme discrimination and lack meaningful access to HIV prevention and treatment services. Addressing the special needs of key populations at risk is essential to halting the spread of the virus.

A rights-based approach to HIV prevention and impact mitigation of the pandemic are key priorities in the Swedish response.

Young people another important player in the response

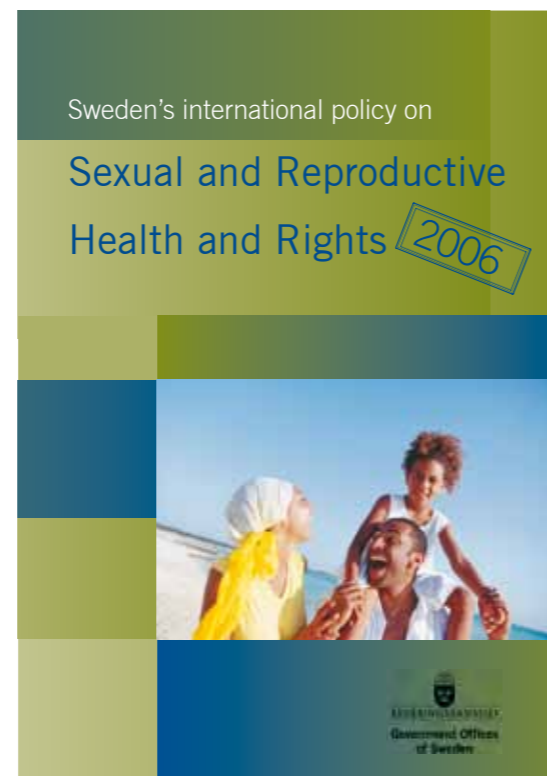
Strengthening respect for human rights and greater gender equality helps bring young people and key populations at risk to the fore. Many children and young people have been infected with HIV at birth. Others have been infected through sexual contacts, assault or substance abuse. Young girls are especially vulnerable to HIV when subjected to sexual or other forms of violence. Inequality often forces girls to have sexual relations with older men.

Young people are sexual beings and have the right to positive, responsible and safe sex lives, regardless of their HIV status. Access to sexuality education and information on HIV and AIDS, particularly in schools, is important.

Access to youth clinics that provide information, education, contraceptives (including condoms), voluntary counselling and testing is also essential. Young people must be seen as actors who are capable of and allowed to influence decision-making, instead of being seen only as a target group for interventions.

Swedish support to governments and regional entities

At the bilateral level support from Sweden, through Sida, includes funding to national AIDS councils, health sectors and civil society. Support to HIV and AIDS programs and to the health sector, in general, helps strengthen health systems in low income countries. Sweden prioritises initiatives that integrate sexual and reproductive health and rights, SRHR, services with HIV prevention and treatment. Sweden is also undertaking a special effort to improve maternal health and reduce maternal mortality. In addition,



Download Sweden's international policy on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights at www.regeringen.se

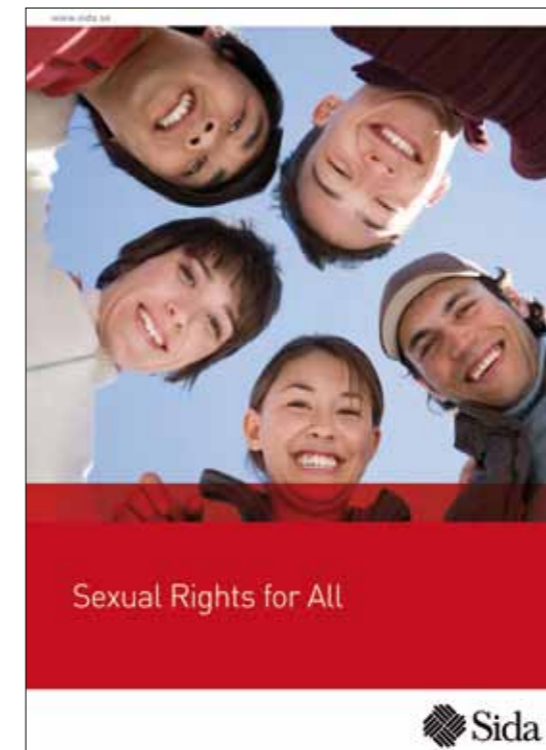
Sida supports regional initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia.

Swedish-Norwegian Regional HIV/AIDS Team

Sweden and Norway together have established a regional HIV/AIDS Team for Sub-Saharan Africa that works with HIV and AIDS within the thematic areas SRHR, social protection and leadership & human rights. Based at the Swedish Embassy in Lusaka, Zambia, the Swedish-Norwegian Regional HIV/AIDS Team supports the work of regional economic organisations, civil society initiatives and applied research.

The role of civil society organisations

Civil society organisations, CSOs, play a key role in the fight against HIV and AIDS as service providers, disseminators of information and advocates. Civil society comprises a variety of organisations including religious communities and associations, NGOs, networks of PLHIV and parliamentary groups.



Download Sexual Rights for All from www.sida.se



**Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Sweden**

Ministry for Foreign Affairs

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs is responsible for Sweden's relations with other countries. The task is to contribute to the achievement of the Government's overall foreign policy objectives. In addition, the ministry is responsible for coordinating Swedish foreign policy within the Government Offices. In short, the area of responsibilities includes:

- Foreign and security policy;
- Aid and development;
- Trade and promotion;
- Promoting and enhancing respect for human rights.

In addition to its overall policy and coordination function on aid and development, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is also responsible for the aid channelled through international organisations such as the UN, the international development banks and the EU.

www.regeringen.se



SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION AGENCY

Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency - Sida

Sida works according to directives of the Swedish Parliament and Government to reduce poverty in the world, a task that requires cooperation and persistence. Through development cooperation, Sweden assists countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. Each country is responsible for its own development. Sida provides resources and develops knowledge, skills and expertise. This increases the world's prosperity.

www.sida.se



THE NATIONAL BOARD OF HEALTH AND WELFARE

The National Board of Health and Welfare

The National Board of Health and Welfare is a government agency under the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. The National Board works to promote good health, social welfare and high-quality health and social care on equal terms, including the prevention and control of communicable diseases.

The National Board:

- Collects, compiles, analyzes and disseminates information;
- Develops standards based on legislation and acquired information;
- Exercises supervision to ensure that standards are maintained, to minimize risks and to improve patient safety;
- Undertakes other official duties such as maintaining health data registers and official statistics.

www.socialstyrelsen.se



