

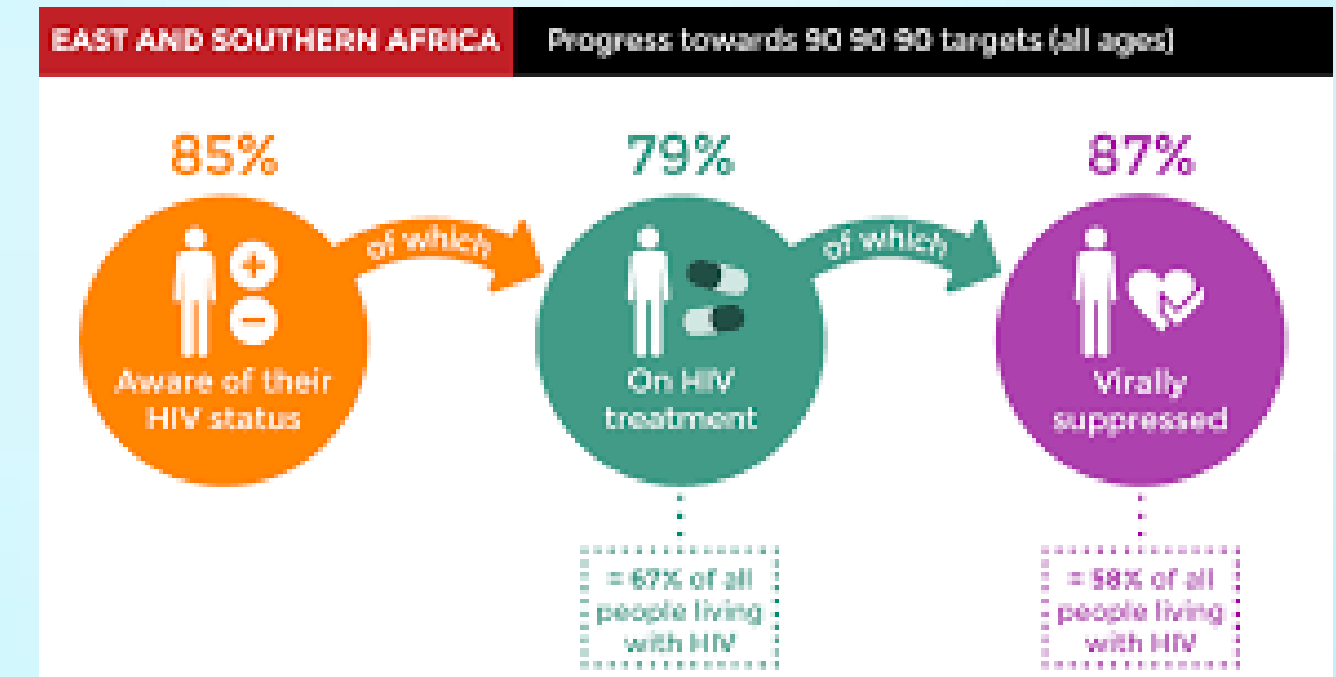
The Catholic *Choose to Care* Initiative in Southern Africa

by Dominic Cosentino



Introduction

The Catholic *Choose to Care* Initiative group was established in 2000 in attempt to provide individuals with the knowledge necessary to avoid risk of exposure. HIV/AIDS can be contracted via sexual activity and intravenous drug use. Though both of these contraction methods are controversial to the Catholic faith. However, aid and relief efforts continue. There are five Southern African countries that receive their help: South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Swaziland, and Lesotho.



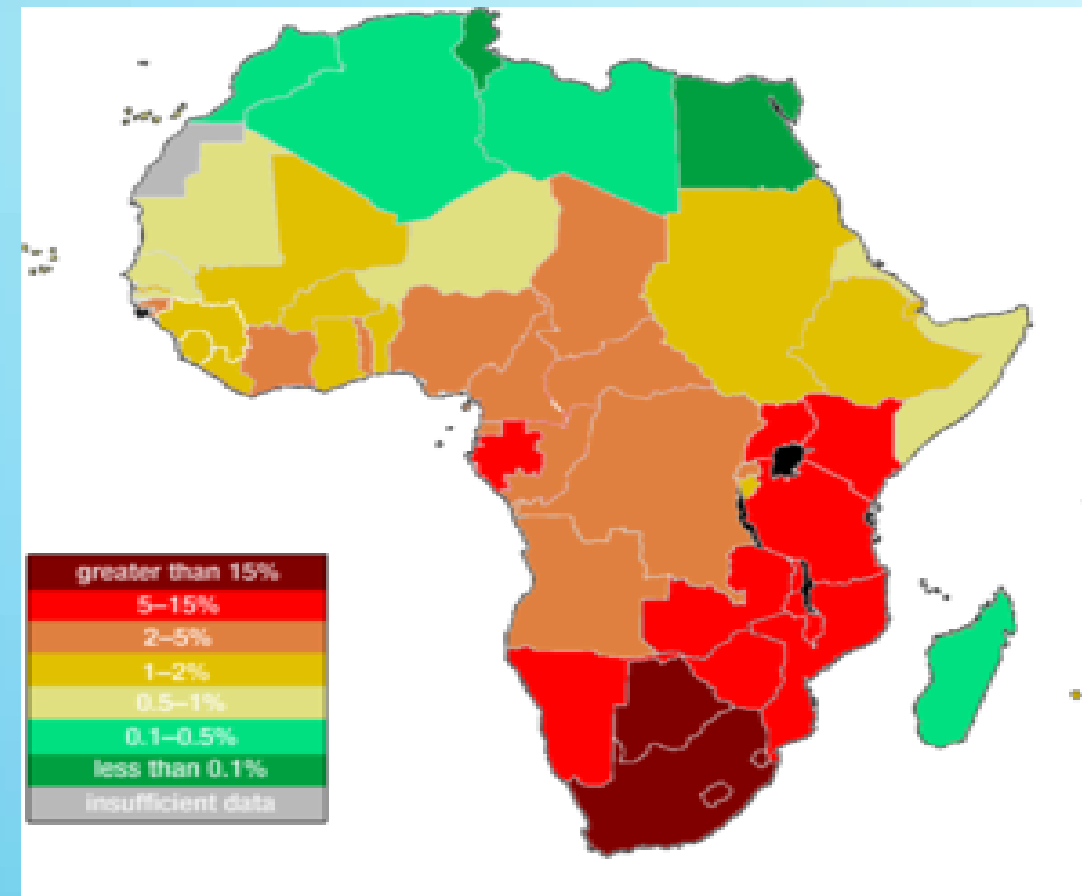
Prevention

- o Focus on the younger groups of population (ages 15-24)
 - 50% of new HIV infections were found in this age group
- o Sociopolitical and Economic Factors
 - Migrant labor and forced removals under *apartheid* tore apart the fabric of family life in black communities
 - Years of students in militancy and revolt against the apartheid regime led to the collapse of parental authority
 - Extreme poverty impels many young women to attempt to generate income via sex work
 - Families that are headed by the oldest child due to the parents dying from AIDS-related illnesses have increased vulnerability
- o *Education for Life*
 - Adopted by the full plenary meeting of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference as the chief prevention program among youth
 - Originally developed in Uganda
 - Stresses long-term abstinence and life-long fidelity among marital spouses
- o *ABCD Program*
 - "Abstain, Be faithful, Change your lifestyle, or you are in Danger of contracting AIDS."
- o Anti-Intravenous drugs
 - Especially emphasized during the birth process

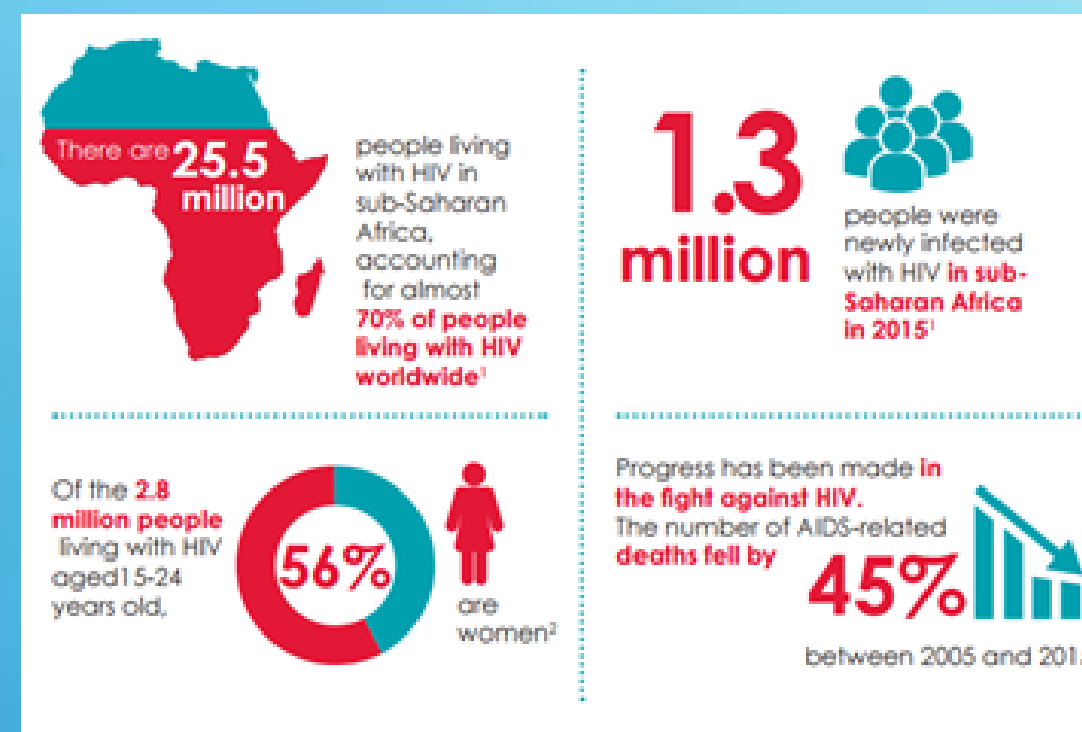
The Catholic Medical Mission Board helped establish PMTCT (prevention of mother to child transmission)

Interfaith Response

- o The Conference Aids Office is represented on such international networks as the *World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP)*, and such national networks as the *National Religious Association for Social Development (NRASD)*, which serves as a working arm of the *National Religious Leaders Forum (NRLF)*
- o Collaboration also extends to academic institutions. The Conference of AIDS Office and Siyabhabha Trust worked together with the University of Peoria Centre for the Study of AIDS in order to build capacity of nongovernmental organizations and community-based organizations in Limpopo Province, Mpumalanga and Gauteng
- o The Director of the AIDS Office has served as the representative of the faith communities on the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC). The AIDS Office also participated in the UNAIDS-hosted series of consultations to plan for future scenarios on AIDS in Africa



Percentage of Population Living with HIV/AIDS



Conclusion

The sections of this poster provided key information to help you understand the ongoing efforts of the Catholic *Choose to Care* Initiative in Southern Africa. The Epidemic is being combated by this group through *preventative* action, care, and treatment procedures. The initiative educates and urges individuals to abstain from sexual activity and drug use as their prevention mechanism. *Care* programs are set up in areas big and small, urban and rural. Training is being provided to individuals to help aid in the *care* part of the initiative. Though *treatment* of HIV/AIDS is quite challenging, hospices and home-based care programs are in place to help individuals and their families get through their experience with the disease. With these actions in place and in increased emphasis on the importance of this epidemic, future generations can hope to live a life much different than their ancestors.

Care

- Some 40 home-based care programs in South Africa
- *Caring Network* alone has over 100 caregivers and each looks after five patients in the poorest areas of the city
- Sisters of Mercy, St. Peter's Good Shepherd and St. John the Baptist, have all joined together to provide care divided up over a region to ensure the maximum amount of people can receive care
- In desert areas like Karoo, *Good Shepherd Hospice*, provides care to patients in nine villages spread out over a radius of 300 kilometers
- Some home-based care projects are entirely community based like *Thembaletu* near Malelane
- The Catholic Church in South Africa training programs
 - Established to educate and train individuals to provide care
 - Durban-based *Sinosizo* is used by the health authorities as the 'master trainer' in the province of KwaZulu-Natal
- Importance of good nutrition
 - *Empilisweni* has started a successful pig and chicken farming cooperative for people living with HIV/AIDS in King Williams Town.

Treatment

Through the many home-based care and hospice programs, as well as its clinics, the Catholic Church in Southern Africa provides treatment for HIV-Related opportunistic infections. This is often done in partnership with the government health structures. Catholic hospices, for example, that look after people living with HIV suffering from tuberculosis, access tuberculosis treatment for them from the nearest government facility

