

HIV and AIDS

The impact of the HIV and AIDS epidemic is huge in developing countries, especially in Africa. More than two-thirds of all people living with HIV in the world live in sub-Saharan Africa.

As well as other population groups, older people have been affected by the epidemic. Around 3.5 million people over 50 years old are living with HIV worldwide. There is no real recognition of this and often a lack of consideration of older people in relation to HIV and AIDS. Indeed, people aged 50 and over are frequently excluded from data collected on the disease and, therefore, are very often excluded from prevention, care and treatment programmes. For example Millennium Development Goal Six on combating HIV and AIDS has 15-49 as its baseline indicators, so older people are not in the target group.

People aged 50 and over are particularly affected by HIV and AIDS in three different ways: as caregivers of the sick adult children; as caregivers of orphaned grandchildren by AIDS; and as people living themselves with HIV and AIDS. In sub-Saharan Africa around 40% of people living with HIV are being cared for by older people ([HelpAge International, 2008](#)). In east and southern Africa, 40-60% of children orphaned by AIDS are cared for by their grandparents, usually their grandmothers ([UNICEF, 2007](#)). Older people, and especially older women, play an essential role as caregivers, often without the information on HIV prevention and care needed. It makes them less able to perform their caring roles, inform their grandchildren about HIV and also protect themselves from HIV. It is crucial that older persons have access to information on HIV so that they can protect themselves and others.

Most older people taking care of their sick family members in developing countries have low income and low resources. The cost of caring for someone living with HIV is very high. A [study](#) from HelpAge International in 2007 showed that in Mozambique, in 2006, caring for an orphaned or vulnerable child costs an average of US\$21 a month, while caring for someone with HIV cost US\$30. However, older people had an average monthly income of just US\$12.

The latest data says that there is a growing of number of people aged 50 years old and older who are living with HIV. 10% of adults living with HIV worldwide are aged 50 or over ([UNAIDS, 2013](#)) and in most of countries of sub-Saharan Africa older people living with HIV constitute over 15 per cent of all people living with HIV ([HelpAge International, 2013](#)). The

'ageing' of the HIV epidemic is taking place. This is because of population ageing, the success of antiretroviral therapy, the decrease of HIV incidence in young people and the risk behaviours and risk situations that older people are living in.

This lack of data and consideration of older people in relation to HIV/Aids is a serious issue that needs an appropriate and urgent response.

[Click here](#) for more detailed information and resources from HelpAge International on HIV and ageing.