

NW m_TeZE Of Aids In SA

casting dark shadow

.STAIZ 7/!7/1!

Aids could seriously skew the economy and threaten political stability in South Africa, according to the Institute of Race Relations.

In the latest issue of the SAIRR's Social and Economic Update, researcher Robin Hamilton says it seems apparent that Aids will affect every sector of the economy - "and if it proves to be a constraint on economic growth, it may in turn retard or reverse efforts to redress the socio-economic inequalities".

Mr Hamilton cites a senior research Fellow at the University of Natal, Alan Whiteside, as estimating that between 1,3 million and 7 million people will die of Aids by the year 2000.

Mr Whiteside says the first to die would be the urban elite, leading to a loss of manpower. -

Emigration danger

This could be exacerbated by the emigration of professionals seeking to escape the Aids epidemic, as well as by the drying up of immigration to South Africa from Europe.

Shortages of skills would then lead - to dramatic wage rises 1 _

As early as 1995, insurance giant Old Mutual expects a decline in business confidence and a massive diversion of resources to medical care and other welfare spending because of Aids.

Mr Whiteside notes that the World Bank has indicated that as the direct In addition, Dr Goen Slabber, ' Director-General of National Health and Population Development, was .

quoted in January as saying that 315000 South Africans would be HIV ' positive by the end of the year.

He said many more were at risk in Africa than in Europe, as Aids mainly infected sexually active adults between 15 and 49.

Whereas in Europe the predominant number of cases involved homosexual and bisexual men, as well as intravenous drug users, in Africa the highest incidence of the disease occurred in heterosexual men and women.

The SAIRR publication notes that ' many blacks view Aids as a white man's disease aimed at reducing _ black population growth, while in the 4 white community it is considered to be a disease restricted to blacksmd - homosexuals.

Mr Hamilton comments that the Government's educational programme has been inadequate in facilitating a change in sexual behaviour to prevent the spread of Aids and dis-

pel myths about the disease.

According to Minister of National
Health and Population Development

. Dr Rina Venter, "We are doing what-
wecan. The problem of Aids is that it _
is not primarily a medical problem.
It relates to social behaviour. You
can't legislate against sexual hehavf; 4
. iour."

.Mr Hamilton reports that Dr
Venter has warned that if only
0,55 percent of the population is ad-
cost of Aids is only 20 percent of the :- 4 mitted to hospital with Aids every
true cost, the cost to the economy
available hospital bed in South Africa
could be. between R32 billion and '1 would be fined, and the costs of treata
R78 billion' ln the year 2000.

Two local studies reveal that by
April 1990, 87701 donations to blood 4.
transfusion services in South Africa
had tested positive for HIV, and in
November 1990, some 10 000 residents
Of Johannesburg were behaved to be
' e

"1" 5 meat would equal the country's 93:5
present health budget. 1 . A :3.

According to Mr Hamilton, politi-
cal unrest and poor socio-economic '
conditions make it all the more (11111..
cult to persuade people to alter their
sexual behaviour.- -Sapa.

-. _-----vw-4-wun_

E1911

August 10, 1992

Memo

To: Southern Africa Support and Human Rights Groups

From: Research Department

Re: AIDS in South Africa: Is There a Problem?

With most of the world's attention fixed on the political violence in South Africa, one of the deadliest diseases to ever hit the region goes unnoticed: AIDS. Little has been done to curb the rise of AIDS in South Africa, a disease that could cause the deaths of just as many innocent civilians as the current violence unless drastic action is taken soon. The type of action needed will be slow in coming because of the continuing discrimination in the health care system.

The indifference displayed by the South African government will result in an explosive increase in the number of AIDS cases each year. Current as well as predicted future statistics show that the people of South Africa are on a dangerous path to destruction, as the information below indicates:

a The government estimated that 315,000 South Africans would be HIV positive by the end of 1991.

1 It is believed that within 10 years, the number of cases of AIDS will rise from between 100,000 to 200,000 to around 5 million.

9 Within the next 13 years, experts believe that anywhere from 25-30% of the population will be infected by the virus.

Why then, after reading these shocking statistics, has the government been so apathetic in slowing the spread of the AIDS virus? The government did budget \$2.1 million dollars in 1991 to combat the disease, however, this money has gone to programs in Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban, which are predominantly white urban centers; little has been done to aid black suburban townships. In fact, it was the United States that gave Soweto, the largest black township in South Africa, the \$2H3,000 desperately needed to prevent the rapid spread of the virus. Many pleas were made to the South African government for the assistance, but the government did little to help. The eagerness of the government to help only white dominated areas reflects that the system of racial discrimination is still in place in South Africa.

It is tragic that a disease like AIDS is seen only in a political context, and not seen as a health risk for the entire nation, black and white. This is a national crisis that needs to be addressed, and the system of apartheid is blocking any progress on the issue. Until racial discrimination is eliminated, little can or will be done to thwart the spread of AIDS in South Africa.

TheAfrlcamnd, 198 Broadway, New York. N.Y. 10038 (212) 962-1210

Tilden J . LeMelle J annifer Davis

Chairman

Execu ave Director