



The global response to AIDS has achieved significant results since the first case was reported 30 years ago, with a record number of people having access to treatment and rates of new HIV infections falling by nearly 25 per cent, the United Nations says in a new report.

“[AIDS at 30: Nations at the crossroads](#),” released by the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS ([UNAIDS](#)), comes ahead of a three-day high-level event at UN Headquarters (8-10 June) focusing on efforts to combat the epidemic.

“Thirty years ago when scientists first identified AIDS, it was mysterious, deadly and spreading,” Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro [told](#) a news conference in New York.

“Now three decades on, more and more people have access to treatment, infections are declining and greater numbers of pregnant women living with HIV are keeping their babies free of infection.”

“We have come a long way,” [added](#) Michel Sidibé, the Executive Director of UNAIDS. Highlighting the report’s findings, he noted that about 6.6 million people were receiving antiretroviral therapy in low- and middle-income countries at the end of 2010, a nearly 22-fold increase since 2001.

Also, a record 1.4 million people started life-saving treatment in 2010 – more than any year before – and at least 420,000 children were receiving antiretroviral therapy at the end of 2010, a 50 per cent increase since 2008.

Mr. Sidibé said that with access to treatment, “AIDS has moved from what was effectively a death sentence to a chronic disease.” New HIV infections are now declining at a significant rate, by 25 per cent in the last 10 years, he added.

According to the report, the rate of new HIV infections fell by more than 50 per cent in India and by more than 35 per cent in South Africa. Both countries have the largest number of people living with HIV on their continents.

“Access to treatment will transform the AIDS response in the next decade. We must invest in accelerating access and finding new treatment options,” said the Executive Director.

“Antiretroviral therapy is a bigger game-changer than ever before – it not only stops people from dying, but also prevents the transmission of HIV to women, men and children.”

At the same time, the report notes that significant challenges remain. The latest estimates from UNAIDS shows that 34 million people were living with HIV at the end of 2010 and nearly 30 million have died from AIDS-related causes over the past 30 years.

Despite expanded access to antiretroviral therapy, a major treatment gap remains. At the end of 2010, nine million people who were eligible for treatment did not have access. Treatment access for children is lower than for adults – only 28 per cent of eligible children were receiving antiretroviral therapy in 2009, compared to 36 per cent coverage for people of all ages.

While the rate of new HIV infections has declined globally, the total number of HIV infections remains high, at about 7,000 per day. In addition, gender inequalities remain a major barrier to effective HIV responses. HIV is the leading cause of death among women of reproductive age, and more than a quarter of all new global HIV infections are among young women between the ages of 15 and 24.

According to the report, investments in the HIV response in low- and middle-income countries rose nearly 10-fold between 2001 and 2009, from \$1.6 billion to \$15.9 billion. However, in 2010, international resources for HIV declined.

“I am worried that international investments are falling at a time when the AIDS response is delivering results for people,” said Mr. Sidibé. “If we do not invest now, we will have to pay several times more in the future.”