



THE FOURTH SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL HIV, BEHAVIOUR AND HEALTH SURVEY

In January 2012, the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) launched the fourth survey in a series of national population-based surveys to assess the HIV epidemic in South Africa. The Nelson Mandela Foundation first commissioned the HSRC in 2002 to undertake South Africa's first national household prevalence survey of HIV/AIDS. This survey was subsequently repeated in 2005, 2008 and now in 2012.

The 2012 survey was funded by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the USA, with additional financial support from the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the HSRC and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). On 1 April 2014, the results of this survey were released and the launch edition of the report is available on the HSRC's website at www.hsrc.ac.za.

The survey was aimed at conducting surveillance of HIV infection and behaviour in South Africa with a view to obtain a better understanding of the factors driving the HIV epidemic. This data will serve as a benchmark for the evaluation of the current South African National Strategic Plan (NSP) for HIV and AIDS and STI 2012-2016, and will also provide baseline information for tracking the progress and impact of the next NSP currently under development. These indicators are also key to international reporting, including the Millennium Development Goals and the United Nations General Assembly Special Session.

The most recent survey's study design and methods were based on the methods used and validated by surveys conducted in the past. However, in contrast to previous surveys, the 2012 survey invited all household members to participate. This "take all" approach allowed the study to report on the sero-discordance between sexual partners and on mother-and-child HIV discordance

within in a particular household. Participants in this survey will be able to access their HIV survey results at their nearest HIV counselling and testing (HCT) sites.

The focus of the 2012 survey was expanded to include a wide range of health information, including the health of infants and mothers and emerging interventions such as male circumcision. It also addressed issues such as psychological health and behavioural risk, such as alcohol abuse and drug use.

METHODOLOGY

The 2012 survey comprised a population-based household survey that involved fieldworkers travelling across the country asking members of selected households to participate. As with similar national studies, households were selected on a random basis from communities throughout South Africa to ensure that the results are representative of the population. Members of households who volunteered to participate were asked to complete a questionnaire and to provide a confidential blood specimen for HIV testing.

A total of 11,000 households agreed to participate in the survey. Over 38 000 household members completed individual questionnaires, while 29 000 agreed to provide a blood specimen for HIV testing.

FUTURE RELEVANCE

The information gathered from this study, together with the data gathered through the South African National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey provides a comprehensive assessment of the health, behaviour, HIV, and nutritional status of the people of South Africa. This information is crucial to understand the current health of South Africans and to guide future strategies and programmes.



The CEO Prof Olive Shisana in the field with the fieldworkers





With financial support from:



Research Consortium:

