



The Price of Political Inaction

**And what needs to be
done to end it**

Presentation to the plenary session of the XVI International AIDS
Conference, Toronto, 2006

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Structure

- The importance of political leadership
 - South Africa: looking back
 - China: looking forward
- The duties that flow from recognising that HIV is human rights issue
- The responsibilities of government
- The responsibilities of society

UN General Assembly
Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS
2006

“We now have the means to reverse the global pandemic and to avert millions of needless deaths”

A tale of two countries...

South Africa



2006: 5.54 million infections

2010: ?

China



2006: 650,000

2010: 10 million infections?

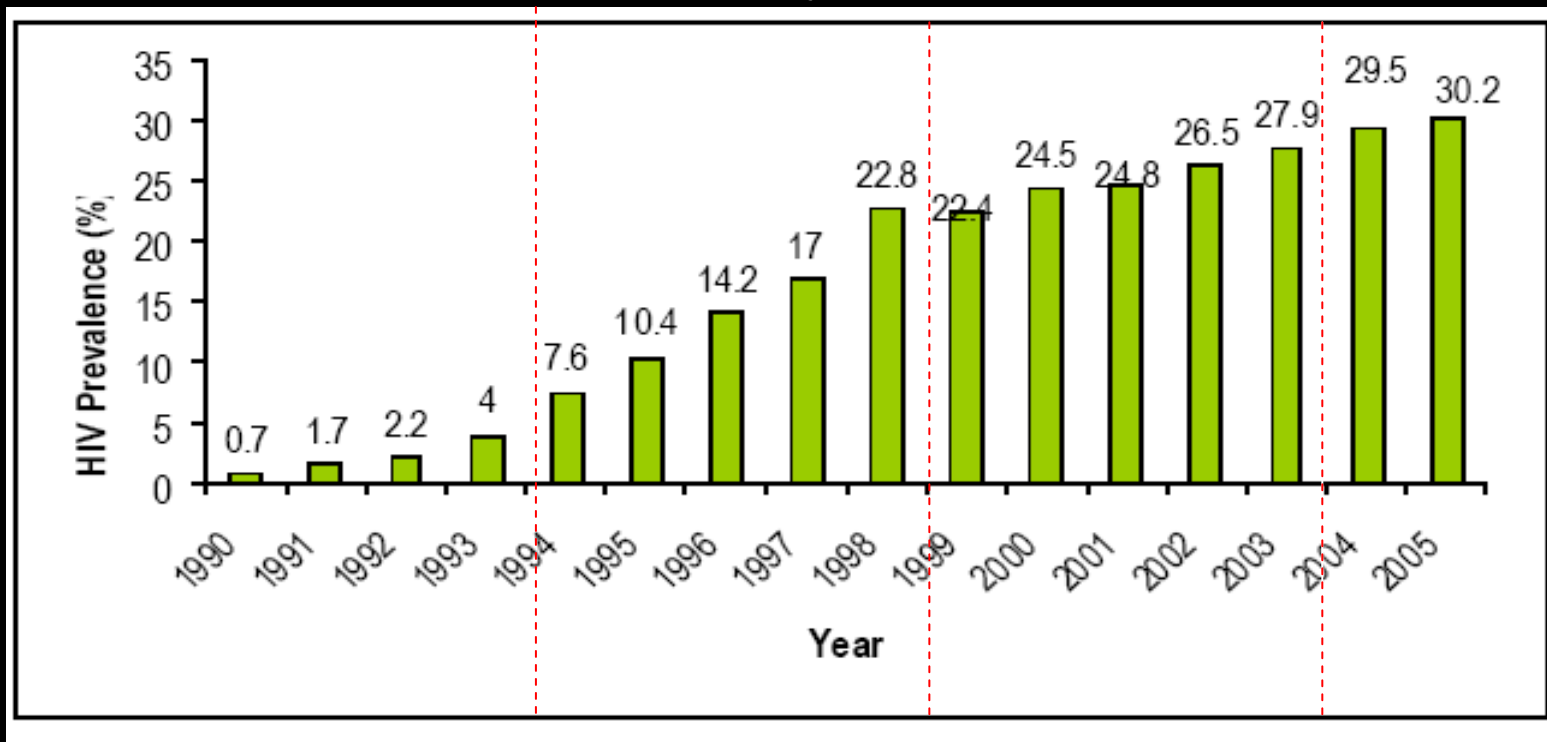
....showing why political leadership is important

South Africa: A preventable epidemic?

- 1990: Chris Hani, ANC leader
 - “We cannot afford to allow the AIDS epidemic to ruin the realisation of our dreams. Existing statistics indicate that we are still at the beginning of the AIDS epidemic in our country. Unattended, however, this will result in untold damage and suffering by the end of the century”
- 1991: Jockelson et al
 - “the migrant labour system has institutionalized a geographic network of relationships for spreading STDs. This network suggests that once HIV enters the heterosexual mining community it will spread into the immediate urban area, to surrounding urban areas, from urban to rural areas, within rural areas, and across national boundaries.”

South Africa 2006: HIV Prevalence

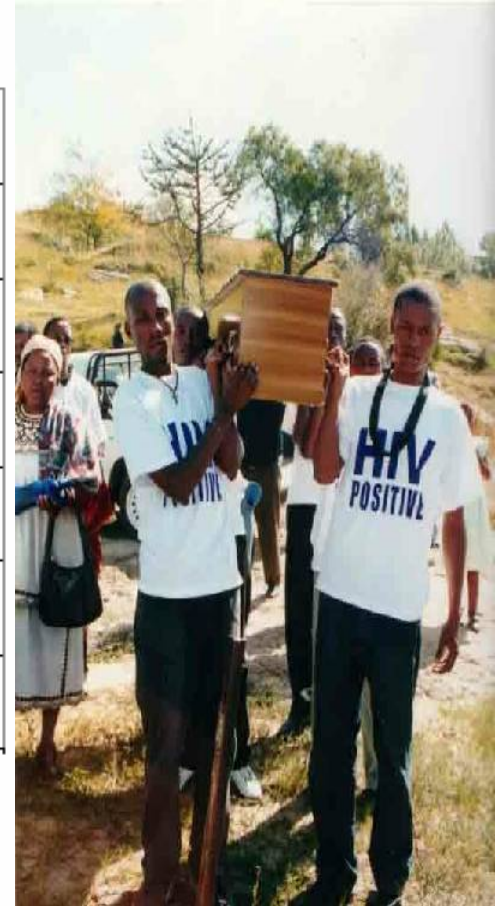
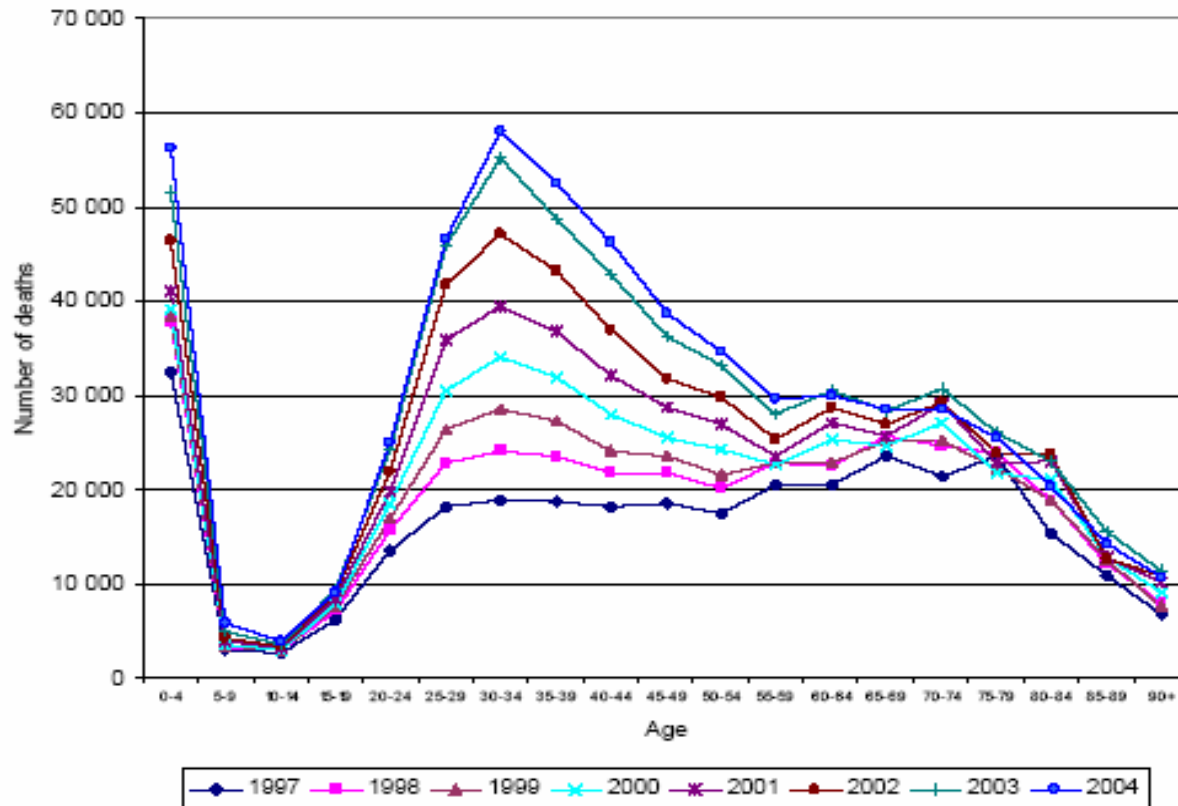
Rises for the fifth consecutive year



Health Department, Republic of South Africa, National HIV and Syphilis Prevalence Survey, 2005.

Official government report confirms: +/- 800 deaths a day

Figure 3.4: Distribution of deaths by age and year of death: 1997–2004



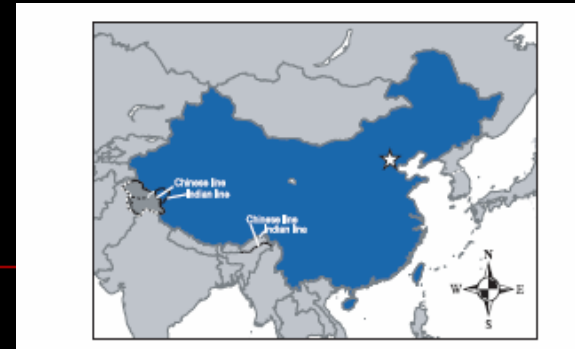
Statistics South Africa, *Mortality and Causes of Death in South Africa, 2003 and 2004: Findings from Death Notification, 2006*.

Silence = Death

- SA President Thabo Mbeki to City Press, February 2006:

- “No-one has sounded the alarm where I work daily in the Presidency and nobody has said there is a particularly alarming tendency of people dying. There has not been any indication . . . ; in the presidency nobody has said we are losing 10 percent of our staff every year because of AIDS.”

2006: China –the next silence?



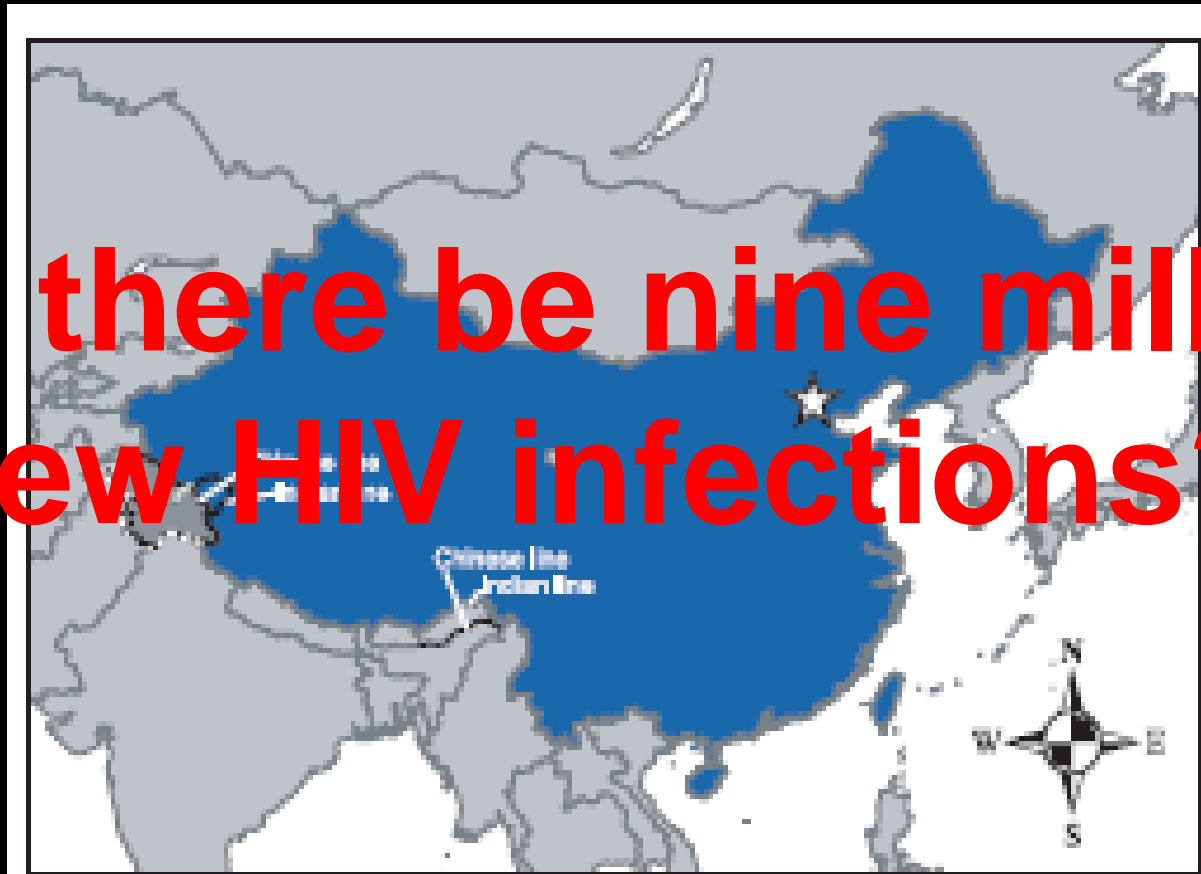
- UNAIDS/WHO:
 - “China is experiencing one of the most rapidly expanding HIV epidemics in the world. .. it is projected that *without concerted prevention and treatment efforts*, the number of people living with HIV/AIDS in China will exceed 10 million by 2010 ...”

Similarities with South Africa

- Known:
 - 'risk groups'
 - projected epidemiology
 - Impact of:
 - Internal and external migrancy
 - Gender inequality
 - A government with other priorities

China 2006 – 2010:

**Will there be nine million
new HIV infections?**



Will the UN let it happen?

- Possible that it will take place relatively unnoticed:
 - 10m people = less than 1% prevalence
- New pattern of impunity for human rights violations:
 - Attack on Lebanon
 - Civilian casualties in wars in Iraq, Sudan etc
- The dulling effect of statistics on appreciation of the scale of the human suffering

'Concerted prevention and treatment efforts'? – The record so far

- HIV Prevention:
 - Blood safety scandal
- Women:
 - 2 – 6 million sex workers sent to 're-education camps' in 10 years
- Civil society:
 - Harassment, arrests, disappearance of human rights activists and people with HIV

Human Rights

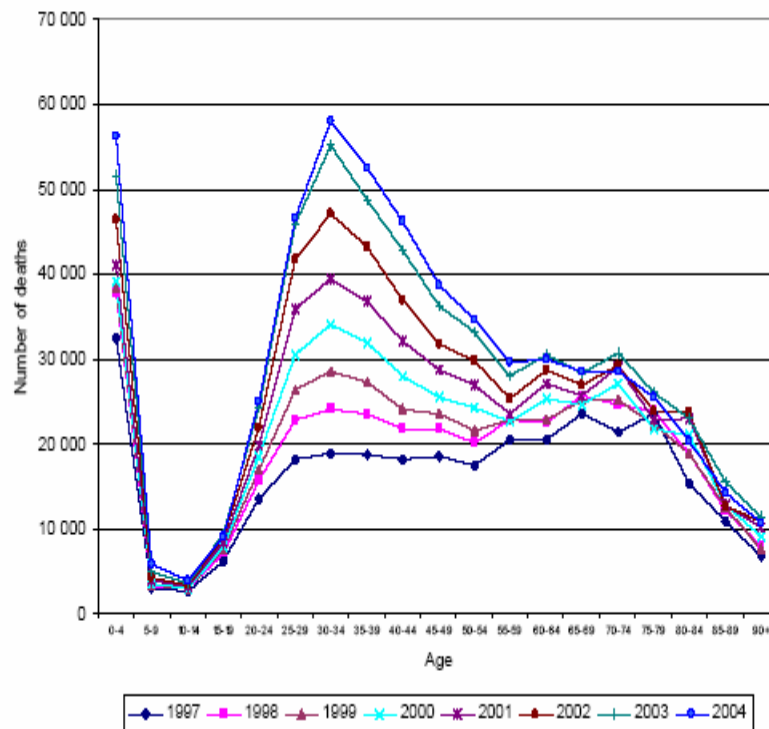
- The tragedy for people vulnerable to, or living with, HIV is that the political response to AIDS is directly influenced by geo-politics and rules of 'diplomacy' which disallow truth-telling.
- UN Secretary-General, March 2006:
 - 'Development in Africa requires a new approach; and the good news is that South Africa is pointing the way.'

An equal right to life?

South Africa, 2005

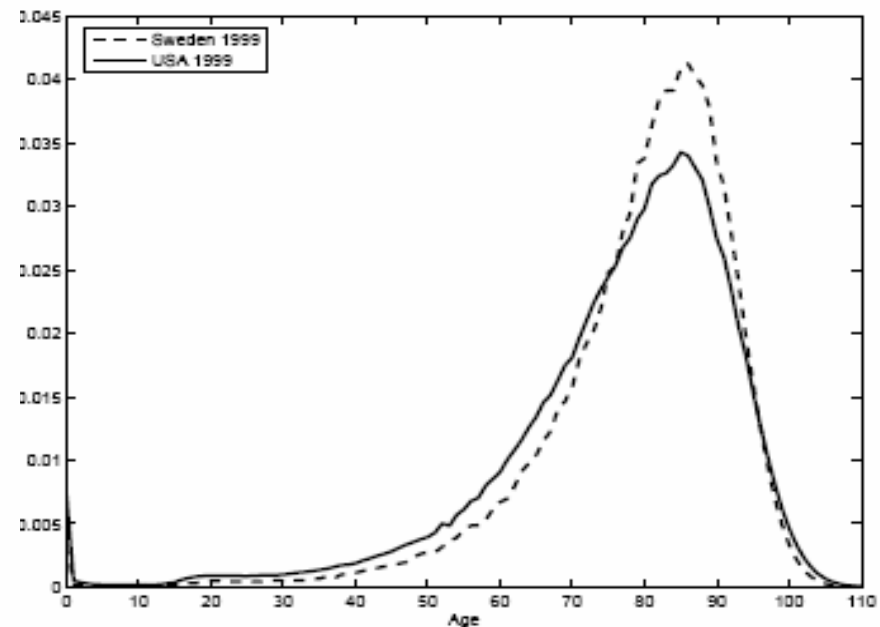
Sweden & USA, 1999

Figure 3.4: Distribution of deaths by age and year of death: 1997–2004



Statistics South Africa, *Mortality and Causes of Death in South Africa, 2003 and 2004: Findings from Death Notification*, 2006.

Figure 1: Distributions of ages at death in Sweden and the U.S., 1999



Notes: Data are the ${}_n d_x$ densities from life tables for both sexes combined provided by the Human Mortality Database.

R D Edwards, S Tuljapurkar, *Inequality in Life Spans and Mortality Convergence Across Industrialised Countries*, 2005

Political leadership?

- Why do we demand it?
- What is it?
- What concretely do we demand?



What do we do without it?

- People of developed countries: pressure governments to 'Fund the Gap'
- Devise a plan to ensure that universal access by 2010 is attained, including an emergency plan to get health care workers and treatment to where they are needed.
- Endorse targets for HIV prevention and treatment set by the African Union in Abuja (May 2006) and ensure that national and global targets are developed by the end of 2006 as promised in the UN Political Declaration (2006).
- Global Day of Action on 1 December 2006.

‘We have the
means’

- Will we utilise them?

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