

World Aids Day - December 1

South African President Jacob Zuma calls for 'massive mobilisation' to combat HIV/AIDS.

ACTSA

25/11/2009

During his speech to the Council of Provinces in October 2009 the South African President, Jacob Zuma, demanded that this years World AIDS Day should mark the beginning of a strengthened campaign where all South Africans are "armed with information... to safeguard their health and the health of the nation".

"There should be no shame; no discrimination; no recriminations. We must break the stigma surrounding AIDS." This comes after years of denial and mixed messages from the Presidency and the Ministry of Health.

South Africa has the highest number of people infected with HIV/AIDS in the world, estimated at around 5.7 million, including 300 000 children under the age of 15 years, in 2007 (UN 2008 Global Report on the HIV and AIDS Epidemic).

The focus of 2009 World AIDS Day is universal access and human rights. It is estimated that 33.4 million people worldwide are living with HIV, with 71% of all new HIV infections in sub-Saharan Africa. 29% of pregnant women accessing public health services in South Africa tested HIV positive.

Zuma has committed to cut new HIV infections by 50% and increase the extension of the antiretroviral programme to 80% of those who need it, both by 2011. He says that 'though we have the largest antiretroviral programme in the world, we are not yet winning this battle. We must come to terms with this reality. We need a massive change in behaviour and attitude especially amongst the youth'.