



a world class African city

City of Johannesburg
Health Department

4th Floor, B Block
Metropolitan Centre
158 Civic Boulevard
Braamfontein

PO Box 31244
Johannesburg
South Africa
2000

Tel: +27(0) 11 407-7513

www.joburg.org.za

MEDIA STATEMENT

BACKGROUND

Cities have historically taken the lead in the AIDS response through the delivery of services, community advocacy and sustained political leadership. As dynamic centers for economic growth, education, innovation, positive social change, and sustainable development, cities offer important opportunities and have inherent advantages in accelerating the response and in taking transformative action to ensure that services are delivered to everyone in an equitable and an efficient way.

Cities are at the centre of ending the global AIDS epidemic, as 47% of people living with HIV live in 19 municipalities across South Africa. HIV responses succeed when they are anchored in strong political leadership to do four things:

- follow the data, science, and evidence.
- tackle inequalities.
- enable community organizations and civil society to play their vital role.
- and ensure sufficient and sustainable funding.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Johannesburg is part of the Fast Track Cities network, which has been heavily affected by the epidemic and are at the forefront of responding to HIV. During the African Fast-Track Cities Meeting, which was held in Durban, on 15 -17 March 2016, Mayors from various cities committed to the Paris Declaration to lead Fast-Track action towards achieving the 90-90-90 and other Sustainable Development Goals targets by 2030. The Paris Declaration on Fast-Track Cities ending the AIDS epidemic, launched in December 2014, has resulted in the mobilization of political, technical and financial support for the HIV response in Cities.

South Africa has made remarkable progress against AIDS, showing us what can be achieved, and the city's progress towards the 95, 95, 95 strategy as adopted by the South African Government:

- In the City of Johannesburg, over 96% of individuals living with HIV, representing approximately 691,978 out of an estimated population of 6.2 million, have been tested and are aware of their HIV status.
- More than 509,487 individuals living with HIV, accounting for approximately 74%, are currently receiving antiretroviral treatment.
- 73% of people on treatment are virally suppressed

Since 2010 we have seen a decline in AIDS deaths, mother-to-child transmission of HIV, and in new HIV infections. However, we need to do more if we are to end the AIDS epidemic.

U = U STRATEGY

Launched in more than 100 countries worldwide,

U=U is considered a game-changer. U=U is more than just an instrument for achieving the global 95–95–95 treatment targets. It represents a rights-based, community-led public health paradigm shift that reshapes our understanding of what it can mean to live full and healthy lives with HIV without stigma, shame, or the fear of transmitting HIV to others. U=U is also a means to addressing inequalities, especially mitigation of stigma and discrimination faced by people living with HIV, which remains one of the major challenges contributing to the spread of HIV in the CoJ and South Africa. HIV stigma is a significant reason for people to be unwilling to get tested or put on treatment.

City of Johannesburg is the second Metro in the country to launch the U=U campaign in July 2023, following Ethekewini in KZN. The launch of the U=U campaign comes at a critical time, because - despite considerable efforts in recent years - we are not yet on track to end AIDS by 2030.

We must implore the men in our communities, young and old, who are living with HIV to seek out and adhere to treatment. The campaign also presents a huge opportunity for leaders to end AIDS in children who are not on treatment. We have left the children behind; we need to act and act fast to make sure that children are put on life saving treatment. We acknowledge the pivotal role played by the People living with HIV Sector in City of Joburg in this campaign from its conceptualization to date and their involvement has not gone unnoticed through the Retshidze programme. UNAIDS is supporting the Men sector in Johannesburg to mobilize other men to get involved in the fight against Gender-Based Violence and femicide and for men to test for HIV, take

treatment and stay on treatment. U = U campaign gives hope and empowers PLHIV to take ownership. It messages the importance of taking regular antiretroviral treatment leading to viral suppression and thus no risk of transmitting HIV to others.

COMMITMENT

We continue to value the support we get from the Global agencies, Businesses and Developmental Partners as well as strong partnerships within government departments.

We are confronted with a constantly changing environment characterized by rapid urbanization, inward migration, economic exclusion, and soaring inequality. Poverty is a prevalent issue in specific areas, causing a sense of hopelessness and scarcity in communities that are already struggling with limited prospects and resources.

Unemployment rates persistently remain elevated, especially among marginalized groups, intensifying the cycle of poverty and continuing to exclude the majority, which is black and female, from meaningful social and economic life. Despite these challenges, a glimmer of hope persists - a tenacious spirit that refuses to be subdued by hardship.

We must steer Johannesburg towards its goal of becoming a World Class African City as guided by our long-term Growth and Development Strategy – Joburg 2040. Our vision for Johannesburg, which encompasses economic dynamism, social equity, and environmental stewardship, is outlined in our 2024/25 IDP review. This document serves as a guide to inspire collaborative efforts, ensuring that all stakeholders are actively involved in shaping the city's future. This is consistent with our priority to have an active and engaged citizenry. Through the IDP process we have given practical expression to one of our priorities to create an active and engaged citizenry. We have launched the Youth Directorate in the City and it has commenced with the important work of formalizing a strategy for Youth Development and Empowerment within the City. We have placed great emphasis and focus in skills development in general and in respect of the youth in particular. The City is assisting young people with programmes which direct them towards self-development and sustainable work opportunities.

The City is resilient as “having the capacity to persist in the face of change and to continue to develop with ever-changing environments.”

We are pleased to onboard the sixteen sectors formally on the Johannesburg AIDS Council i.e.,

Organizations representing people living with HIV (PLHIV), Youth, Women, Men, Faith-Based organizations, Higher education, Law and human rights, LGBTQI+, Labor, Disability, Sex workers, Sports, arts and culture, Traditional healers, Traditional leaders, Research and development partners and for business sector processes are underway.

In Conclusion

Our acknowledgment of challenges is not a concession to defeat but a clarion call to action. It is an affirmation that we, as stewards of Johannesburg, possess the resilience and determination to overcome hurdles and transform setbacks into stepping stones toward progress. The echoes of historical injustices, the complexities of urban dynamics, and the global challenges that knock on our doorstep are not insurmountable obstacles but opportunities for innovation, unity, and growth.

The Johannesburg AIDS Council reaffirms its commitment to mobilising all sectors in the fight against HIV, TB, and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). By leveraging partnerships, sharing expertise, and fostering community engagement, the Council seeks to accelerate progress, strengthen accountability, and ensure sustainable health outcomes for all residents of Johannesburg. Through this collective approach, the Johannesburg AIDS Council aims to contribute meaningfully towards achieving an HIV-free generation by 2030.

Together, let us build a stable and resilient City government in service of the People!