It’s not a life sentence

In the past many people died of Aids without anyone knowing about their status. This happened mainly because those who were living with the disease were afraid of being isolated by their own communities.

Now with the government’s comprehensive plan to provide better treatment and control of the disease, people’s behavior is changing. More people are visiting HIV and Aids Service Points that the government started a year ago. At these stations people are able to know their HIV status and get free help.

The Health Department has set up one-stop centres to make services accessible to all affected by HIV and Aids. However, most of those who visit the centres are still women. Men are still not too comfortable with knowing their status.

The government is spending over R1.5 billion on the programme which also deals with caring, treating and giving support to those infected and affected by HIV and Aids.

The aim of the plan, which was approved by the Cabinet in November 2003, is to improve the services to people living with HIV and Aids and those who live with them.

The points provide services such as distribution of condoms, HIV and Aids information and education, voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) as well as giving antiretroviral drugs and nutritional supplements.

The programme started its aim was to have at least one unit in each of the country’s 53 health districts. That has been done and now the target is at least one service point in half of the 284 municipalities.

The programme dealt with amongst other things, prevention of the HI virus from mother to child, provision of treatment, care and support VCT, visiting areas where prostitution is high, TB and other HIV related diseases.

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