



U.S. Agency for International Development

Bureau for Global Health

COUNTRY PROFILE

HIV/AIDS

JORDAN

Jordan has a very low HIV prevalence rate, and only a few cases of AIDS have been identified. AIDS was detected in Jordan in 1986, and as of December 2003, 334 cumulative cases of AIDS, with 67 deaths, had been reported to the National AIDS Program. Nearly 60 percent of cases have occurred among non-Jordanians, and 68 percent of all individuals with HIV infection are between the ages of 20 and 39.

Estimated Number of Adults and Children Living with HIV/AIDS (end 2002)	334
Total Population (2001)	5.051 million
Adult HIV Prevalence (end 2001)	<0.1%
HIV-1 Seroprevalence in Urban Areas	
Population most at risk (i.e., sex workers and clients, patients seeking care for a sexually transmitted infection, or others with known risk factors)	0%
Population not at risk (i.e., pregnant women, blood donors, or others with no known risk factors)	0%

Sources: UNAIDS, U.S. Census Bureau, Jordanian Ministry of Health

Sexual activity is the primary mode of HIV transmission, accounting for 52 percent of all infections in Jordan. Although nearly 22 percent of infections are due to blood and blood products, these appear to have occurred early in the epidemic; blood transactions in Jordan are now subject to 100 percent centralized, mandatory testing. Injecting drug use and mother-to-child transmission together account for 5.5 percent of HIV/AIDS cases. Nearly 21 percent of all infections are attributable to unknown modes of transmission.

HIV/AIDS reporting is obligatory according to public health laws, but available epidemiological data may reflect only a portion of the actual cases. Little information exists on HIV infection trends in Jordan; for example, HIV/AIDS prevalence among pregnant women is unknown, no estimates have been made of the number of children infected with HIV, and HIV screening has occurred among only a few sex workers and men who have sex with men.

Discussion of sexual practices is culturally unacceptable in Jordan; infidelity, homosexuality, and sex work are well hidden. As a result, social pressure, discrimination, and stigma hinder the fight against HIV/AIDS. The use of male and female condoms as contraception and as dual protection against sexually transmitted infections receives little promotion, although condom use has risen steadily in recent years.

Jordan faces the following challenges in maintaining its current low HIV/AIDS prevalence:

- Pervasive fear and stigma associated with HIV/AIDS, which discourage frank discussion of the illness and prevention measures
- Absence of a strong HIV/AIDS surveillance system
- Lack of interest or willingness on the part of nongovernmental organizations to work with high-risk population groups
- Lack of education and programs to address risky behaviors, to dispel misperceptions, and to prevent the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections



Map of Jordan: PCL Map Collection, University of Texas

1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC
20523-3600

www.usaid.gov

- Widespread lack of condom marketing, demand, availability, and use to prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted infections
- Lack of access to reproductive health information, particularly for young people
- Limited use of universal prevention precautions

NATIONAL RESPONSE

Jordan's response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic is led by the National AIDS Program in the Ministry of Health; by the National AIDS Council, whose members are ministers from all government sectors; and by a National AIDS Committee. Jordan continues to provide strong support to the national blood transfusion service and requires mandatory HIV testing for foreigners who reside in Jordan for more than one month.

The National AIDS Program is constrained by a limited budget and a small staff, which consists of a manager, a physician, a counselor, and 12 district public health officers who work part-time as focal contacts for HIV/AIDS activities in their districts.

The Ministry of Health provides antiretroviral drugs to people living with HIV/AIDS; in 2002, \$200,000 was allocated from the public budget for drug purchases and distribution. With funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Ministry of Health also purchased laboratory instruments to test CD4 and CD8 cell levels in individuals with HIV infection; it has also leveraged support through the private sector to ensure that infected individuals receive free viral load tests.

The Ministry of Health believes young people are most at risk for HIV infection, and plans are in place to integrate an awareness program into the national school curriculum. The National Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) and HIV/AIDS Hotline and Counseling Center now operates under the auspices of the National AIDS Program.

In 2003, Jordan applied for and was awarded nearly \$1.8 million from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to strengthen and expand existing HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and support activities.

USAID SUPPORT

Jordan is one of 31 countries receiving basic resources from USAID to help track the epidemic; to maintain technical assistance, training, and commodity support; and to leverage additional funding and support from other donors. USAID is Jordan's major international donor for family planning, reproductive health, and primary health care services, having allocated \$41.5 million in 2003 for these activities.

USAID projects are implemented primarily through Family Health International's IMPACT Project. Through this mechanism, USAID provides the Government of Jordan with technical assistance and financial support for the following activities:

- Support to the National STI and HIV/AIDS Hotline and Counseling Center
- Assistance to the National AIDS Committee to conduct strategic planning activities, including sponsorship of regular meetings
- Behavior change communication activities with youth
- Assistance to improve treatment guidelines for sexually transmitted infections
- Formative assessments of potential high-risk behaviors among people in selected sites
- Support to local nongovernmental organizations

Capacity building

Through Family Health International's IMPACT Project, USAID provides technical assistance to the National STI and HIV/AIDS Hotline and Counseling Center to adapt, translate, reproduce, and distribute promotional materials. This work is being expanded in 2004, and will include study tours for members of the National AIDS Committee.

Control of sexually transmitted infections

In 2003, USAID provided funding to conduct a prevalence study of reproductive tract infections in women. The study was conducted by local partners, and a dissemination workshop was held in December 2003, at which recommendations for further action were discussed.

Recommendations emanating from the study include the development of algorithms to provide treatment to women, which will supplement the Ministry of Health's focus on syndromic management, and methods to strengthen the diagnostic and management capability within the Ministry of Health.

Behavior change communication

USAID funding is used to tailor behavior change communication messages to match Jordan's cultural, social, and religious tenets. Funding is also being provided to enhance the capacity of the National STI and HIV/AIDS Hotline and Counseling Center to provide counseling, information, and support services to its clients.

Through Family Health International, USAID coordinates World AIDS Day activities with the Ministry of Health and nongovernmental organizations. World AIDS Day activities have been expanded to Zarqa and Irbid Governorates under the patronage of the governors.

Involving people living with HIV/AIDS

Most people living with AIDS in Jordan do not tell others of their condition, and those who do are sometimes persecuted. Combating the epidemic will not be possible unless HIV and AIDS become visible, stigma is challenged, and people living with HIV are encouraged to play their part in a community-wide response. This requires resolve and courageous leadership, particularly by government and religious leaders. USAID continues to support these efforts.

Nongovernmental organizations

Nongovernmental organizations have not typically been involved in HIV/AIDS activities in Jordan, but their work is fundamental to maintaining a low HIV prevalence. USAID funds a variety of activities for this purpose by supporting, for example, the Jordanian Association for Family Planning, which is working to increase health financing and management efficiencies. USAID provides partial or complete financing for demographic and health surveys, and infectious disease surveillance, along with the introduction of new family planning methods and improvements to the quality of services offered by public and private health providers. USAID also supports the National Population Council and other organizations as they develop HIV/AIDS communication strategies and policies.

Family Health International is using USAID funds to recruit nongovernmental organizations willing to work with at-risk population groups (such as tourist trade workers and commercial sex workers) and to develop and expand HIV prevention services. Organizations such as the Jordanian Red Crescent Society and the Family Awareness Center in Zarqa are receiving funding and technical support to expand their ability to conduct behavior change communication and similar activities.

Surveillance

Through Family Health International, USAID works with the Ministry of Health to develop protocols and relevant materials to implement surveillance activities, and to establish four sentinel surveillance sites. The Ministry of Health is planning to conduct surveillance using World Health Organization guidelines. To complement this work, in 2004, USAID funds will be used to provide technical assistance for a limited behavioral surveillance survey within a single at-risk population.

Youth and HIV/AIDS

Approximately 40 percent of Jordan's 5.2 million people are under the age of 15. According to the 2000 Jordan Youth Survey, most young Jordanians have a basic understanding of family planning and sexually transmitted infections, but several social factors make young Jordanians vulnerable to HIV infection. In Jordan's conservative culture, open discussion of sexual behavior is considered taboo, and young people lack access to reliable information and guidance about such matters, both in and out of school. Economic hardships have meant that young Jordanians are delaying marriage, which has led to more sexual contacts outside of marriage. High unemployment has left young people to spend their spare time in cafés and amusement centers or working as unskilled laborers, thus, exposing them to potential pressure for risky sexual behavior.

With USAID funding, Family Health International continues to support peer education activities by offering training to youth volunteers in their outreach work, documenting success stories, collaborating with a university student council and community service office to provide peer education for students, and integrating HIV/AIDS messages into university

print materials. More than 50,000 print materials with important prevention messages have been distributed to youth in the last two years, and other universities have requested peer education training.

Involvement of young Jordanians in HIV-prevention activities has been successful as evidenced through the following items:

- Efforts to stem the HIV epidemic and to promote HIV awareness began at the grassroots level at universities, and they have now expanded to include support from university leaders.
- Through the enthusiastic involvement of young volunteers, large numbers of young Jordanians have received key prevention messages.
- Cultural barriers are being overcome through discussions of previously sensitive topics on sexuality, HIV/AIDS, and stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS.
- Other universities have requested peer education training by a core group of peer educators who received training from USAID through Family Health International.

Voluntary counseling and testing

USAID is working to review Jordan's voluntary counseling and testing policies. Activities include promoting better training for counselors and revising monitoring forms to collect data for national indicators. USAID will continue to work with other donors to expand the number of centers in Jordan that offer voluntary counseling and testing services. Family Health International uses USAID funds to support the National STI and HIV/AIDS Hotline and Counseling Center in the following ways:

- Upgrading the facility and offering technical assistance to improve record-keeping and reporting systems, by funding promotional brochures, and by translating and printing counseling manuals in Arabic
- Offering training for health educators to enhance their counseling skills and to strengthen counseling and testing referral networks
- Providing funding for a day-clinic that provides monitoring and treatment services for individuals with HIV infection, and distribution of antiretroviral drugs and condoms

Monitoring and Evaluation

In December 2003, USAID sponsored a skills-building workshop to assist the National AIDS Program to improve its monitoring and evaluation activities. The aim of the workshop was to improve participants' understanding of monitoring and evaluation concepts and terms, and to build their capacity to design a monitoring and evaluation system for HIV/AIDS-prevention activities. USAID will provide ongoing support to the National AIDS Program and to its partner nongovernmental organizations to ensure that monitoring and evaluation systems remain in place and valid, and to ensure that collected data are used for decision-making purposes.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

USAID/Jordan

P. O. Box 354

Amman 11118 Jordan

Tel: 962-6-590-6000

Fax: 962-6-592-0143

USAID/Jordan Website: <http://www.usembassy-amman.org.jo/USAID/Extamm.htm>

*Prepared for USAID by Social & Scientific Systems, Inc./TvT Global Health and Development Strategies,
under The Synergy Project*

For more information, see http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_health/aids or <http://www.synergyaids.com>

February 2004

