

# Somaliland

## **A Technical Report**

**The 2004 First National Second Generation HIV/AIDS/STI  
Sentinel Surveillance Survey**

**Among Pregnant Women attending Ante-natal Clinics,  
Tuberculosis and STD patients**

**WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO)**



**July 2005**



**World Health Organization (WHO) in collaboration with Somaliland Health Authorities, World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS); United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA)**

## FOREWORD

Reliable information on HIV/STIs prevalence in Somaliland has been lacking due to the weak health information system and proper tracking of HIV/AIDS/STIs surveillance data. The monitoring of HIV/STIs in Somaliland cannot be effectively understood without reliable base-line data. Equally no meaningful control program on HIV/STIs can be established without adequate knowledge of the prevalence. It is important to stress that the only way to establish a reliable Sero-prevalence baseline data on HIV/STIs is to undertake a standardized comprehensive Sero prevalence study in all regions of Somaliland.

I am pleased to welcome the second Sero- prevalence surveillance report on HIV and STIs from all regions of Somaliland conducted by WHO in collaboration with national health authorities, World Bank and the United Nations agencies. It is gratifying to note that the whole study was nationally driven process with Somaliland health authorities assuming full ownership of the survey while WHO provided the technical, administrative and logistical support.

I hope that with this baseline data, the Somaliland authorities will be in a better position to monitor HIV/STIs disease trends and strengthen further the national capacity to control the HIV/AIDS/ STIs epidemic.

Dr. Ibrahim Betelmal  
WHO Representative  
Somalia

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- Data entry operator and Data Analyst for their immense efforts in entering and tabulating of the data.
- The Nairobi University Department of Microbiology ( WHO Collaborative centre) for accepting to perform the external quality control

This report will not have come out without the immense support of the entire HIV/AIDS partnership in Somalia. The WHO will like to extend its commitment to continue the collaboration with all partners in the field of HIV/AID surveillance in the future.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This survey is the second Sero-prevalence surveillance report following the one conducted in 1999 based on the second generation surveillance system, utilizing the advantage of existing HIV data to improve better understanding of the epidemic. The surveillance covered three sentinel groups (ANC, STIs and TB patients).

This sero-surveillance prevalence study was conducted to (i) update the trend of HIV/Syphilis infection in the country, (ii) determine the current prevalence rates of these infections among ANC attendants visiting antenatal clinics, STIs and TB patients and (iii) to provide information for advocacy, planning and monitoring of interventions.

The survey was technically managed by WHO, financed through World Bank-Low Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS) in collaboration with Somaliland Health Authorities, UNDP, UNAIDS and other development partners. A protocol was developed for the survey by the WHO and sent to Health Authorities, developmental partners of SACB, HIV Technical Working Group and other technical experts for comments. The document was jointly reviewed and adopted for implementation. Manuals and guidelines on all aspects of the survey were produced and adapted. The manuals covered the training of field workers, supervision of staff and procedures, laboratory techniques, recruitment of clients, handling of samples, maintenance of cold chain, storage of samples, and quality control.

Using an unlinked anonymous method as specified in the protocol blood samples were collected from 1561 ANC attendants in 4 sites from 4 regions. Collected samples were initially tested for syphilis and HIV at the site with RPR and Capillus 1/2 respectively. Samples from TB patients were tested for HIV only. ANC attendants who tested positive for syphilis were treated with penicillin. Supplementary vitamins, folic acid and iron were provided to those who were found to be anaemic. The data entry forms were filled with the clients/patients details. The specimen containers were labeled using codes indicating patient/client no. town code, facility code and date. Samples after initial testing on site were transported to zonal reference laboratories. Laboratory technicians specially trained for the survey retested all samples using Capillus HIV1/HIV2 and determine kits and RPR and TPHA for HIV and syphilis respectively under the supervision of WHO laboratory consultant. All results were documented in a specially designed Data Collection Forms. All positive and 10% negative samples were stored at -70 °C for onward transportation to the University of Nairobi, Microbiology Department WHO collaborative Centre for external quality control.

Urine and vaginal swabs were collected from ANC attendants while cervical and urethral swabs were collected from STIs patients and stored at -70 °C for on-ward transportation to the University of Nairobi, Microbiology Department WHO collaborative Centre for Gonococcus and Chlamydia testing using Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR).

SPSS software was used in the management of the survey data and it involved active data entry, data cleaning, and quality control. The result of the survey showed average HIV prevalence of 1.4% and a median prevalence rate of 1.7 % among women attending ANC; 5.6% for TB, 1.3% for syphilis. Pockets of sentinel sites are already in generalized epidemic with HIV prevalence above 1%. The trend in HIV infection in Somaliland is on sharp increase compared to 1999 average prevalence. The HIV prevalence among TB patients is also on the increase as compared with 1999 results. The protective behavioural factors to curb the epidemic are still very low. There are however regional variations and age specific prevalence rates were highest for the age group 25-29 years.

Somaliland still has a good opportunity to control the HIV/AIDS epidemic from further spread to Africa Sub-Sahara levels . It is recommended that the results be appropriately adapted for advocacy, programme planning and interventions. It is also recommended that future surveys should move from "anonymous unlinked" to "linked" surveys within the provision of voluntary counseling and testing (VCT), PMTCT as well as Care and Support programmes for women testing positive. In the present circumstances, the two approaches are not mutually exclusive.

It will be most useful for Somaliland to have a population-based survey among high risk groups as well as sustain the surveillance on biennial basis.

## CHAPTER ONE : INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background Information

Somaliland is on the Horn of Africa and is bordered by Djibouti, Ethiopia and the Gulf of Aden. Somaliland is in a complex emergency situation. The infrastructure, including health services provision, was severely affected by the civil war. The livelihood of large number of the population was affected forcing them to move from rural to urban areas and to neighboring countries. This movement is associated with breakage of social bonds, the phenomenon that is well known for increasing the vulnerability of the population to Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection. The extensive mobility, the low literacy rate and the widespread poverty constitutes serious vulnerability factors.

Data on Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), Human Immune Deficiency Virus (HIV) and the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) are scarce in Somaliland. There was STIs/HIV sero-prevalence survey conducted in 1999, the results of which indicate prevalence among antenatal care (ANC) attendants at 0.9% (1). Accumulative HIV prevalence data coming from blood screening centers since 1996 up to the end of 2003 from the three 7 blood screening units showed 0.8 %.(2).

There is a national HIV/AIDS Strategic Framework and Integrated Prevention, Care and Support Plan developed and supported by the UN system in Somaliland. Syndromic case management was established in Somaliland since 2002 using Kenya protocol

In order to put in place proper HIV/AIDS/STIs control and prevention program, baseline epidemiological Sero-prevalence information on HIV and STIs was conducted in 4 regions. This is the second time a systematic approach of global standards is used to generate information on HIV sero-prevalence.

The survey was executed and technically overseen by World Health Organization and funded by the World Bank. Comprehensive Protocol, various necessary tools and formats and modes operandi were developed by WHO/Somalia WHO/Geneva, EMRO and UNAIDS/Geneva has provided valuable technical guidance. Other development partners in the country have been continuously briefed during the process of implementation on the progress made through the SACB forum. UNAIDS/Somalia office was very helpful in organizing the data and giving valuable inputs.

The report highlights the objectives, methodology, limitations, findings and conclusions of the 2004 National HIV/STI Sero-prevalence among ANC attendants, TB patients attending TB centres and STIs patients attending STIs sentinel sites. In addition, STIs Prevalence was carried among the same clients attending Hargeisa Central MCH, STIs patients attending STIs sites in Hargeisa.

The results of the survey could not have come at a more appropriate time than now when the Somaliland is increasing it's commitment to fight against HIV/AIDS. The authorities in Somaliland, multilateral and bilateral donors, international non-governmental organizations, private sector, the media, the civil society and the general public will find the information from this survey useful for the prevention and control of the epidemic in the country. The information would also serve as a tool for intervention prioritization, resource mobilization, improved commitment, planning, monitoring and evaluation of the response.

### 1.2 Goal and Objectives of the Survey

The main purpose of the survey was to provide relevant, appropriate and timely data for planning effective prevention and control of HIV/AIDS and STIs in Somaliland.

**The specific objectives of the survey were:**

1. To determine the HIV prevalence among ANC attendants, TB and STIs patients
2. To determine the Syphilis prevalence ANC attendants and STIs patients
3. To monitor the trend in HIV and syphilis infection
4. To conduct STIs prevalence study among asymptomatic women attending Hargeisa Central MCH.
5. To conduct STIs prevalence study among symptomatic STIs patients attending Hargeisa STIs sentinel sites.
6. To relate 2004 KABP survey to the Sero-prevalence surveillance data.
7. To use the information generated from the survey for advocacy and planning interventions.



## CHAPTER TWO : METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 *Sentinel Population*

The main sentinel population groups covered during the survey were ANC attendants, sexually active 15-49 years. It is important to note that women of reproductive age are an important population to monitor since they are pivotal to both heterosexual and mother to child transmission of HIV and; are generally used as proxy for the general population.

Other sentinel groups studied included patients with tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases. STIs prevalence study was conducted among ANC attendants visiting one MCH clinic in Hargeisa and STIs sentinel sites in the same town.

### 3.2 *Sentinel Group Inclusion and exclusion criteria*

- **All Groups**

For all the sentinel groups included, the following criteria were used:

- One year continuous residence in Somaliland.
- age group 15-49 years except for TB patients (up to 59 years).

- **ANC attendants**

All antenatal care attendants, aged 15-49 years presenting for the first time during that pregnancy and within the survey period were included. All antenatal care attendants who were having repeat visits at antenatal clinics were excluded.

- **STIs Symtomatic patients:**

All patients attending STIs sites complaining of STIs syndromes such as lower abdominal pain, genital ulcers and characteristic discharge or abscesses were included.

- **STIs Asymptomatic patients:**

All asymptomatic women attending MCH clinics were included. ANC attendants and STIS patients recruited for STIs prevalence study coming for return visits during the study period ere excluded.

- **TB Patients**

All newly confirmed cases with pulmonary and/or extra-pulmonary TB were included while all relapse cases were excluded

### 3.3 *Sentinel sites*

A two stage intentional sampling method was used in selecting the zones and sentinel sites:-

**selection of the zones and the sentinel sites.** In Somaliland, Hargeisa in Galbeed region, Borama in Awdal region Berbera in Sahel region and Bureo in Togdeer region were selected. There was Sero-prevalence survey conducted in 1999, in Somaliland.

The criterion used for selecting the regions was the population density in urban areas and the accessibility.

The sites chosen were MCH clinics, hospitals out-patients clinics, which covers obstetrics and gynaecological clinics/STIs sentinel sites and private clinics, in addition to TB centers. A total of 7 sentinel sites were used.

The criteria for the selection of sites were:

\* This service was provided during the survey period in ANC settings.

- **Availability of functional ANC services with qualified staff**
- **Routine blood collection and testing from pregnant women for syphilis as part of the care and services provided**
- **Performance of routine laboratory tests**
- **Easy accessibility to surveillance field supervisors**
- **Provision of health care services to relatively large numbers of ANC attendants per week so that adequate sample size can be obtained**
- **Catchments of population comprising varied demographic groups**
- **Location in different geographical areas,**
- **Willingness of staff to cooperate and their capability to conduct the survey**
- **Previous participation experience in similar surveys.**

### **3.4 Sample Size**

The sample size was based on the recommendations of WHO. The recommendations take into consideration the estimates of HIV prevalence in the general population surveyed, the precision or relative error considered acceptable and the level of confidence desired. The formula used for calculating the sample size for HIV surveillance STIs prevalence was 95% Confidence Interval=  $P \pm Z \times \sqrt{\{P \times (1-P)/N\}}$

P=Prevalence

Z= confidence level

N=Sample size

- **ANC attendants in MCHs centres**

The sample size was calculated on the assumption of 95% confidence level (Z=1.96) taking into account the feasibility of obtaining the minimum sample number of 350 per MCH site especially in emergency situation as in Somalia.

- **TB patients**

A minimum sample size of 250 was used on the assumption of 95% confidence level.

### **STIs Prevalence Study**

- **Symptomatic STIs Patients**

A sample of 250 was used based on the assumption of 95% confidence level

- **STI asymptomatic Patients**

A sample size of 500 calculated on the assumption of 95% confidence level (Z=1.95) was used.

### **3.5 Sampling Procedure and Sampling Duration**

The sampling procedure used was consecutive sampling. Clients who met the eligibility criteria were selected consecutively until the desired sample size was achieved for all sentinel groups. The sampling duration was 12 to 16 weeks.

### **3.6 Demographic Information**

The following demographic data: zone, name of site, age, sex, living status, number of children, marital status, level of education and history of previous vaginal discharge were collected using structured data collection forms. However, number of children, marital status, history of previous vaginal discharge and level of education were collected only in MCHs and STI sentinel sites where STI prevalence study was conducted.

### **3.7 Training of Field Workers**

A training workshop was organized for all the sites. The participants included doctors, nurses, laboratory technicians, zonal supervisors and program managers. The main objective of the training was to standardize the survey methodology in all chosen sites as described in the survey protocol. The training covered site selection, subject recruitment, administration of data collection forms, blood sample collection, coding, storage, transportation, laboratory testing, confidentiality, ethical issues, quality assurance, supervision and survey management strategies.

A comprehensive laboratory demonstration refresher workshop on HIV and Syphilis testing was carried out for all laboratory technicians that implemented the survey.

### **3.8 Survey Supervision**

Several supervisory visits were carried out at different levels of the operation during the period of the survey. The main objectives of the field supervisions were (i) to ensure that all sites commenced the survey in due time (ii) to assess existing logistics and technical problems that might affect the operation and (iii) to offer solutions to existing problems during the survey.

During each of the supervisory visits, the forms and terms of reference of the different staff were provided to all supervisors to guide the survey procedure, the supervision process and the performance of the field workers.

### **3.9 Technical Leadership and Coordination of the Survey.**

The survey was technically managed by WHO/Somalia. National staff from different regions implemented the survey under close supervision of WHO staff.

## **HIV & Syphilis Surveillance**

### **3.10 Sample Collection**

Certified nurses at sentinel sites carried out sample collection, after being adequately trained by WHO laboratory consultants. Ten (10) ml blood samples were collected in vacutainer tubes for HIV and syphilis testing. The study subject code, the facility code, name of the facility, date of sample collected, age, living in urban or rural areas and study group were indicated in the respective study forms. They were transported to the nearest laboratories by assigned town supervisors/laboratory technicians on daily basis and kept at 2-8 °C.

The sera separated from the blood samples collected from ANC attendants and STIs patients using electric centrifuge. The sera were screened for syphilis (ANC & STI patients), using RPR method and TPHA for

confirmation; while the blood samples collected from TB patients in Hargeisa TB center were tested for hemoglobin estimation using Sahli method at site and the remaining blood was separated for HIV testing only. All serum samples from ANC attendants, STIs and TB patients were screened for HIV using rapid tests (Capillus HIV 1/2). All reactive sera were tested using Determine kit for confirmation at the zonal reference laboratories.

### **3.11 Methods of Sample Collection and Assurance of Confidentiality**

An unlinked anonymous method of blood sample collection was used for the HIV prevalence among ANC attendants, STIs and TB patients. Syphilis and Hb screening was used as the entry point for clients' recruitment. Blood samples were collected from each eligible client, after the administration of the data collection form. Blood samples were coded and sent for syphilis and Hb testing. Syphilis and Hb results were provided as feedback to patients. Those who were positive for syphilis and anaemic were treated. The remaining blood samples were then tested for HIV. The persons who collected samples were different from those who did the testing. Persons who tested samples for syphilis were different from those that tested for HIV, in order to ensure confidentiality.

The clients/patients, the towns, the sentinel sites were given codes without any other identification.

Syphilis screening was done on all sera except for TB patients using RPR screening tests and TPHA confirmatory test. Results were entered in the laboratory forms and sent to the principal investigator, WHO/HIV/AIDS medical officer. The remaining sera were stored frozen at -70°C for onward transmission to Nairobi for external quality control.

### **3.12 Handling of Samples and laboratory Testing**

- **HIV and Syphilis Surveillance**

Blood samples were collected from ANC attendants, STIs and TB patients. They were coded and transported to nearest hospital laboratories after each clinic day. Local laboratory staff immediately separated and performed HIV and RPR testing, using Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) based on the manufacturer's instruction. Sera from TB patients were tested only for HIV after Hb screening at the site.

Capillus HIV 1/2 latex agglutination test was used for the detection of human antibodies to HIV1/HIV2 in the human serum as initial rapid qualitative assay screening test. It is important to note that all samples were retested by different laboratory personnel in Hargeisa reference laboratory. The RPR (Biotec Laboratories, United Kingdom) agglutination test kit was used to screen all the samples for syphilis. All non-reactive sera were reported as negative while all reactive sera were reported as positive. All samples were retested for HIV and RPR. All HIV and RPR reactive samples were then subjected to confirmatory tests using Determine and TPHA kits respectively. The laboratory staff that performed syphilis testing were different from those who performed HIV testing.

- **STIs prevalence study among asymptomatic ANC attendants**

20 ml urine was collected in a sterile screw capped container from each study subject in Hargeisa Central MCH from whom blood samples were collected for HIV and Syphilis surveillance. The codes related to STIs prevalence study were indicated in the study form and the specimen containers were coded by town, sentinel group and facility codes and date of sample collection.

The samples were then tested **on site** for leucocyte, protein and sugar using urine dipsticks by certified nurses. The rest of the urine samples was transported to Hargeisa reference laboratory by the town supervisor/laboratory technicians on daily basis and kept immediately at -70 degrees Celcius while awaiting transportation to Nairobi University/Department of Microbiology for Gonococcus and Chlamydia PCR testing.

- **STIs Prevalence Study among symptomatic STIs patients visiting STIs clinics, Obstetrics and Gynecology in OPDs and private clinics**

Cervical and urethral swabs were collected from genital ulcers and discharges suggestive of STIs from females and males respectively using dry cotton-tip swabs by physicians from STIs sites in Hargeisa. Swabs were collected from patients from whom blood samples were collected for HIV and Syphilis surveillance. Cervical swabs were collected with aid of sterile disposable vaginal speculum. The sterile swab was inserted 2-3 centimeters into the urethra and rotated gently before withdrawing and sending for Gonococcus and Chlamydia PCR testing.

### **3.12 Laboratory Quality Assurance**

The town supervisors/senior laboratory technicians, other than Hargeisa transported all serum samples from sites to Hargeisa reference laboratory. The town supervisors/senior laboratory technicians were responsible for packing and transporting the samples from the nearest hospital laboratory to Hargeisa for internal quality control. Three supervisory visits were organized by the survey team to review and ensure compliance with the survey protocol by field supervisors and laboratory technicians.

Discordant results between Capillus and Determine were reported as indeterminate. The Laboratory staff tested the samples using only codes (anonymous unlinked).

Other quality assurance modalities included the following:

- 1) All the consumables used for sample collection, separation, storage, dispensing etc were sterile and disposable (i.e. not re-used).
- 2) Properly stored (4–8 °C) in-date test kits were used for the Sero-prevalence survey.
- 3) Each test kit was revalidated at the time of use with the kit negative and positive control samples.
- 4) All sera were tested again for HIV and syphilis by laboratory staff working in Hargeisa reference laboratory as an internal quality control under direct supervision of WHO laboratory services consultant.
- 5) All samples were kept in -70°C before transfer to Nairobi University Microbiology Department (WHO Collaborative Centre) for external quality control.
- 6) All positive sera for HIV and syphilis and 10% of the negatives were sent to Nairobi University Microbiology Department for external quality control.
- 7) In the Microbiology Department in Nairobi, HIV was tested by the ELISA and all Elisa indeterminate samples were retested by Western Blot.
- 8) The results in the Microbiology Department were registered in the results forms and sent confidentially to the principal investigator, WHO/Somalia HIV/AIDS Medical Officer.
- 9) Concordance between internal and external quality control was found to be ().

**Table 1: GENERAL CRITERIA FOR INDIVIDUAL SAMPLE CATEGORISATION**

S/N	Site CAP	Zonal Internal QC cap	Zonal Internal QC Determine	External QC Elisa /Western Blot	SERO-STATUS
1.	+VE	+VE	+VE	+VE	POSITIVE
2.	-VE	-VE	-VE	-VE	NEGATIVE
3.	+VE	-VE	-VE	-VE	NEGATIVE
4.	+VE	+VE	-VE	-VE	NEGATIVE
5.	+VE	+VE	-VE	+VE	POSITIVE
6.	+VE	+VE	+VE	-VE	NEGATIVE

### **3.13 Data Management**

The data collection forms were first checked for completeness, obvious errors and inconsistencies. The data was managed with SPSS software. Double entry was carried as a quality assurance. Discrepant records were subsequently reviewed and corrected. All entries on the computer were further checked against that on paper, item by item. Finally, frequency tables were generated for all variables in order to examine whether there were unusual entries.

The analysis focused on determining the prevalence rates of HIV infection and of syphilis by the relevant independent variables such as site, age, and region. The median prevalence rates for each site and Somaliland was determined. Exact 95% confidence intervals (95% C.I.) were also determined for all rates. Differences between regions were evaluated. The 2004 rates were compared with those of the 1999, in order to examine trends and the statistical significance of changes observed. Estimates of the current adult HIV infections and other important HIV/AIDS data was calculated using the 1999 and 2004 Sero-prevalence data in Somaliland.

### **3.13 Limitations of the Survey**

A common difficulty in interpreting data from sentinel surveys is determining the extent to which ANC attendants, STD patients and TB patients are representative of the survey population. The selected survey sites were public ones which may mainly be visited by the poor. However, it is evident that the majority of the Somaliland population consists of poor people. Some sentinel groups such as STIs patients may not use the public clinics for cultural and other reasons.

Overall, antenatal data and population-based data are generally similar provided that a good proportion of women up-take ANC Services. Despite these limitations, studies comparing HIV prevalence rates at antenatal sentinel surveillance sites with rates recorded in population based studies have shown that ANC data are remarkably reliable and acceptable for HIV/AIDS programming.

## CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS

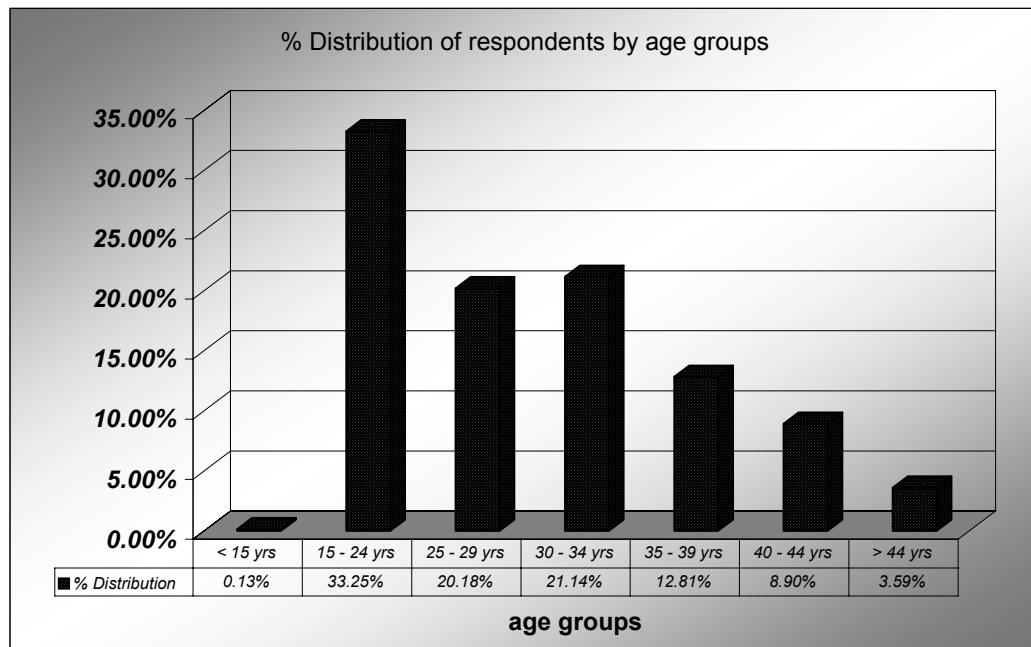
### 3.1 HIV Sentinel Surveillance among ANC attendants at MCH clinics

A total of 1561 blood samples were collected from ANC attendants from central MCHs in Hargeisa, Berbera, Borama and Burao towns.

#### 3.1.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

##### 3.1.1.1 Age groups

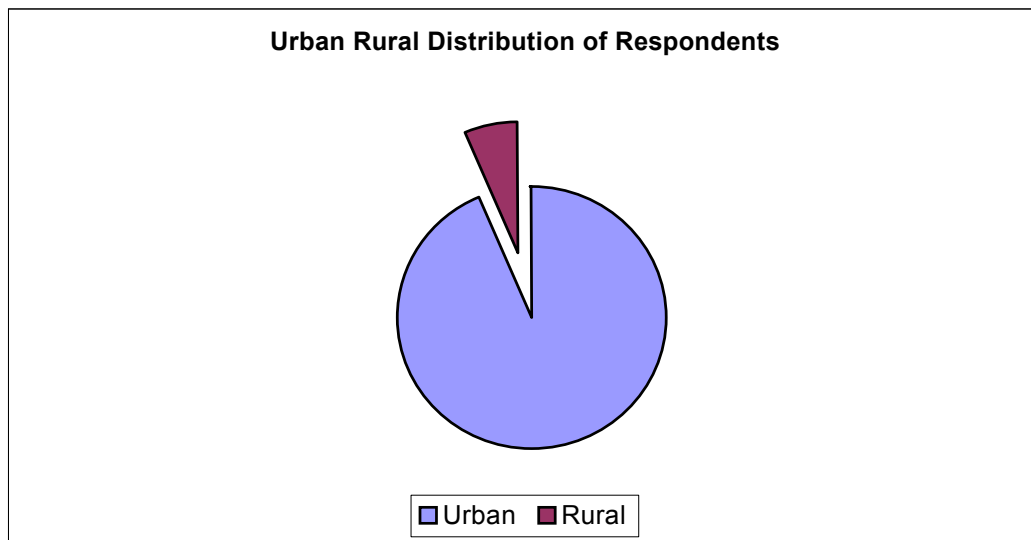
Figure 1: Distribution of respondents by age groups



Relatively more clients aged between 15-24 years (33%) participated in the survey than any other group. Twenty percent (20%) were from 25-29 years, 21% from 30-34 years, 13% from 35-39 years, 9 % from 40-44 years and 4% from above 44 years.

### 3.1.1.2 Respondents by living status

Figure 2: Urban and rural distribution of respondents



Ninety four percent (94%) of the respondents are from the urban towns while 6% are from rural areas.

### 3.1.2 HIV Prevalence among ANC attendants

Table 1: Distribution of HIV Prevalence in Somaliland

Name of town	No tested	No Positive	Percentage Positive	Confidence Interval
Hargeisa	499	8	1.6%	2.70% - 0.50%
Berbera	350	8	2.3%	3.87% - 0.73%
Borama	362	4	1.1%	2.17% - 0.03%
Burao	350	2	0.6%	1.41% - -0.21%
Total	1561	22	1.4%	1.98% - 0.52%
<b>Median Prevalence</b>			<b>1.7%</b>	

Minimum 0.6%  
 Maximum 2.3%  
 Mean 1.4%  
 Median 1.7%

The overall median HIV prevalence among ANC attendants is 1.7% (Confidence Interval 2.6%-0.8%). However the HIV prevalence ranged from 0.6% (C.I: 1.4%-0.21%) in Burao to 2.3% (C.I:3.9%-0.7%) in Berbera, while the overall mean prevalence is 1.4% (C:I: 1.98% - 0.52%).



### 3.1.3 HIV Prevalence among different age-groups

Table 2: Distribution of HIV prevalence by age group

Age Group	No tested	No Positive	Percentage Positive
15-19yrs	169	3	1.8%
20 - 24 years	350	3	0.9%
25 - 29 years	315	8	2.5%
30 - 34 years	330	4	1.2%
35 - 39 years	200	2	1.0%
40 - 44 years	139	1	0.7%
> 44 years	56	1	1.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1561</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>1.4%</b>

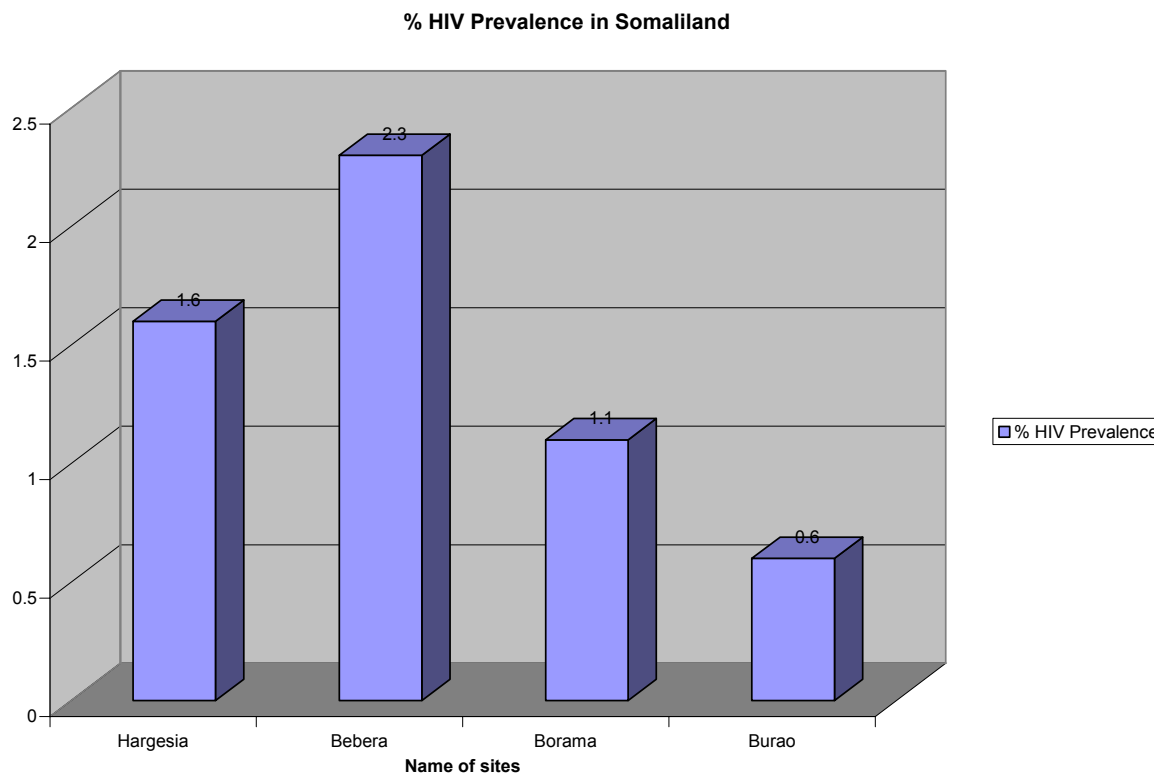
**\*The HIV prevalence in the age group 15-24 years is 1.2%.**

**The HIV prevalence in this group is recognized as global indicator (UNGASS)**

The HIV prevalence is highest among age group 25-29 years (2.5%) followed by 15-19 years (1.8%) followed 30-34 years (1.2%) followed by 35-39 years (1.0%)..

### 3.1.4 HIV Prevalence by Sentinel sites

Figure 3: Distribution of HIV prevalence by sites



HIV prevalence was found to be highest in Bebera, (2.3%) followed by Hargesia, (1.6%), followed by Borama, 1.1% and Burao 0.6%.

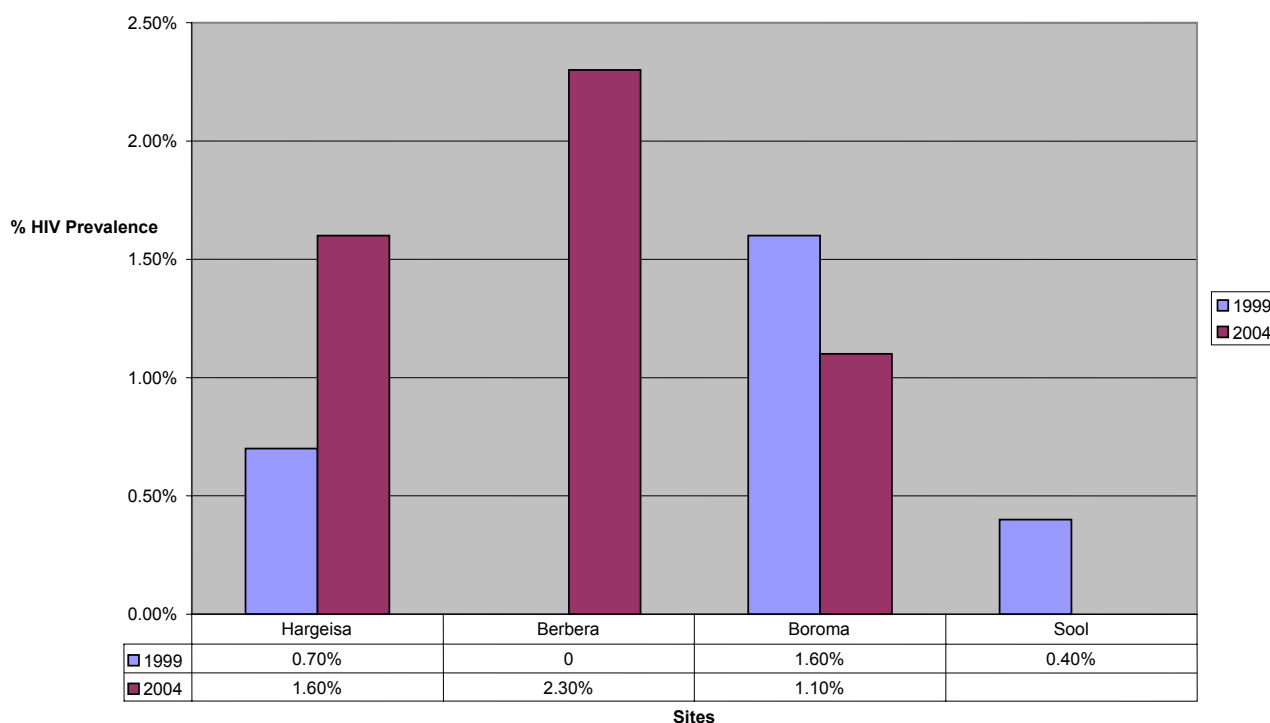
### 3.1.5 Trend of HIV Prevalence in Somaliland

**Table 3: HIV Prevalence trends in 1999 and in 2004 by Sentinel Sites**

Name of Region	1999 <sup>1</sup>	2004
Hargeisa	0.7%	1.6%
Berbera	-	2.3%
Boroma	1.6%	1.1%
Las Anod (Sool)	0.4%	-
Burao	-	0.6%

In Hargeisa, the HIV prevalence increased between 1999, 0.7% to 2004, 1.6%.

**Figure 4: HIV prevalence Trends in 1999 and in 2004 by Sentinel Sites**



The HIV Prevalence is disproportionately on the increase in Hargeisa from 1999-2004. HIV prevalence in Berbera stands out as the highest. Little information is known about the vulnerability factors and nothing about prevalence among vulnerable groups.

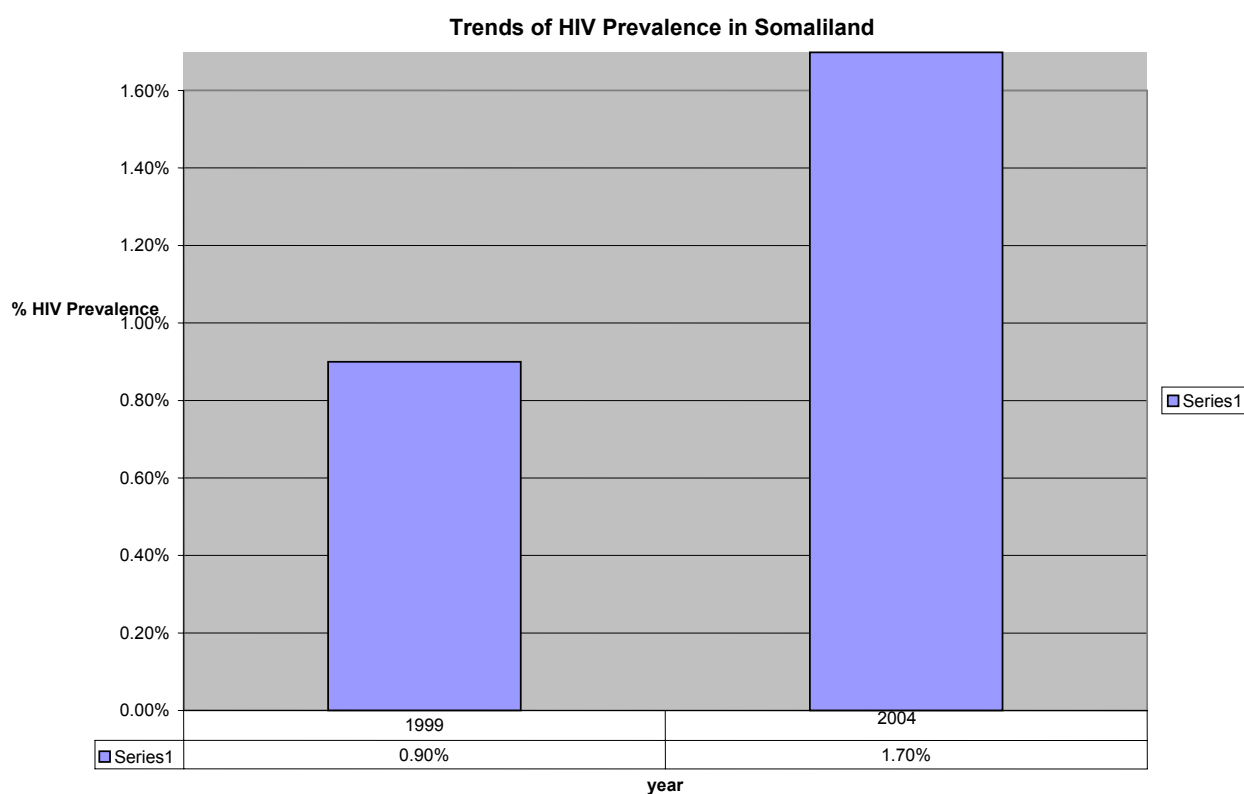
<sup>1</sup> UNICEF 1999- Efforts to Prevent HIV/AIDS in Somaliland

### 3.1.6 Comparison of 1999 and 2004 mean HIV prevalence in Somaliland.

Table 4: Trend of HIV prevalence

Year	HIV Prevalence	Confidence Intervals
1999	0.9% (mean)	
2004	1.4% (mean)	
2004	1.7% (Median)	

Figure 5: Trend of HIV Prevalence in Somaliland



The sharp increase in mean HIV prevalence between 1999 and 2004 is a matter of great concern in a period of 5 years. The mean prevalence increased from 0.9% to 1.4% and if we consider the median in 2004 the increase from 0.9% to 1.7%.

### 3.2 Syphilis Prevalence among antenatal care attendants

#### 3.2.1 Syphilis Prevalence

**Table 5: Overall syphilis prevalence**

Testing	Number of respondents	No Positive	Percentage Positive
RPR	1561	36	2.3%
TPHA	1561	21	1.3%

The overall syphilis prevalence in Somaliland is 1.3%. However RPR screening test showed higher value (2.3%) as a result of the non specificity of the test.

**Table 6: Age distribution of Syphilis**

Age Group	No tested	No Positive	Percentage Positive
< 15 years	2	0	0.0%
15-19 years	169	0	0.0%
20-24 years	350	2	0.6%
15 – 24 years	519	2	0.4%
25 - 29 years	315	4	1.3%
30 - 34 years	330	6	1.8%
35 - 39 years	200	2	1.0%
40 - 44 years	139	5	3.6%
> 44 years	56	2	3.6%
Total	1561	21	1.3%

Syphilis prevalence was found highest among age group above 40 years (3.6%). The prevalence in age group 15-24 years was (0.4%). The data is showing increasing pattern with age.

#### STIs Prevalence among ANC attendants in Hargeisa Central MCH

### 3.3 Gonococcal and Chlamydia Prevalence among asymptomatic ANC attendants in Hargeisa Central MCH clinic

**Table 7: Prevalence of asymptomatic STI**

Asymptomatic STI	Number tested	No positive	% positive per swab
Gonococcus			
Urine	486	7	1.4%
Vaginal Swab	475	5	1.1%
Chlamydia trachamotis			
Urine	486	6	1.2%
Vaginal Swab	475	7	1.5%
Gonococcus and Chlamydia	486	17	3.5%

The gonococcus prevalence among asymptomatic women attending MCH clinic showed 1.1%-1.4% while Chlamydia prevalence among same population group showed 1.2%-1.5% using different sources of testing specimens. The overall Gonococcus and Chlamydia prevalence is found to be 3.5%. If aggregated by age

group the Gonococcus and Chlamydia prevalence among the age group 15-24 years is (5.3%) and 15-19 years is (3.1%) Those positive for Chlamydia and gonococci were found negative for HIV.

### 3.4 HIV Surveillance among Symptomatic STD patients attending STIs clinics in Hargeisa

A total of 243 blood samples were collected, including 162 samples from Hargeisa Group Hospital out-patient unit and 81 samples from gynecology unit/Edna Maternity Private Hospital. The samples were tested for HIV and syphilis.

#### 3.4.1 HIV Prevalence among STIS attendants

**Table 8: HIV prevalence among STD patients in Hargeisa,**

Name of town	No tested	No Positive	Percentage Positive	Confidence Interval
Hargeisa	243	30	12.3%	16.43% - 8.17%

The HIV prevalence among STD patients attending the STI clinics was found to be 12.3% (C.I: 16.4%-8.17%).

**Table 9: HIV prevalence among STD patients by gender**

Sex	No tested	No Positive	Percentage Positive
Males	52	5	9.6%
Female	191	25	13.09%
Total	243	30	12.3%

The HIV prevalence was found to be highest among female STD patients (13.1%) than males, (9.6%). The variation of the data is influenced by the fact that one side had exclusively women respondents.

#### HIV prevalence among STD patients by sites

Name of site	No tested	No Positive	Percentage Positive
Hargeisa Group Hospital	162	27	16.6%
Edna Hospital (Gyn. Dept.)	81	3	3.7%
Total	243	30	12.3%

#### HIV prevalence by sex in Hargeisa Group Hospital

SEX Distribution	Number tested	No positive	% positive
Male	45	5	11.1%
Female	117	22	18.8%
Total	162	27	16.6%

**Table 7: Prevalence of symptomatic STD**

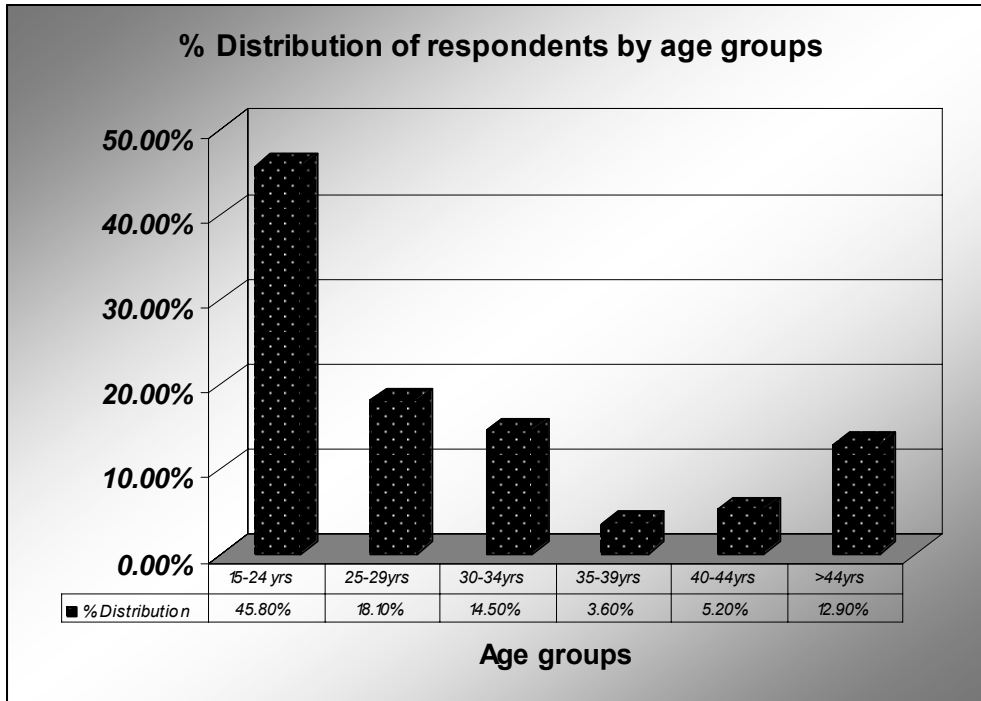
<b>Symptomatic STI</b>	<b>Number tested</b>	<b>No positive</b>	<i>% positive per swab</i>
Gonococcus Cervical Swab	139	2	1.4%
Chlamydia trachamotis Cervical Swab	<b>139</b>	<b>0</b>	0.0%
Gonococcus and Chlamydia	139	2	1.4%

### 3.5 HIV Sentinel Surveillance among patients attending the TB Center in Hargeisa,

A total of 249 blood samples was collected from Hargeisa TB Hospital and tested for HIV only.

#### 3.5.1 Socio-demographic Characteristics of TB patients in Hargeisa

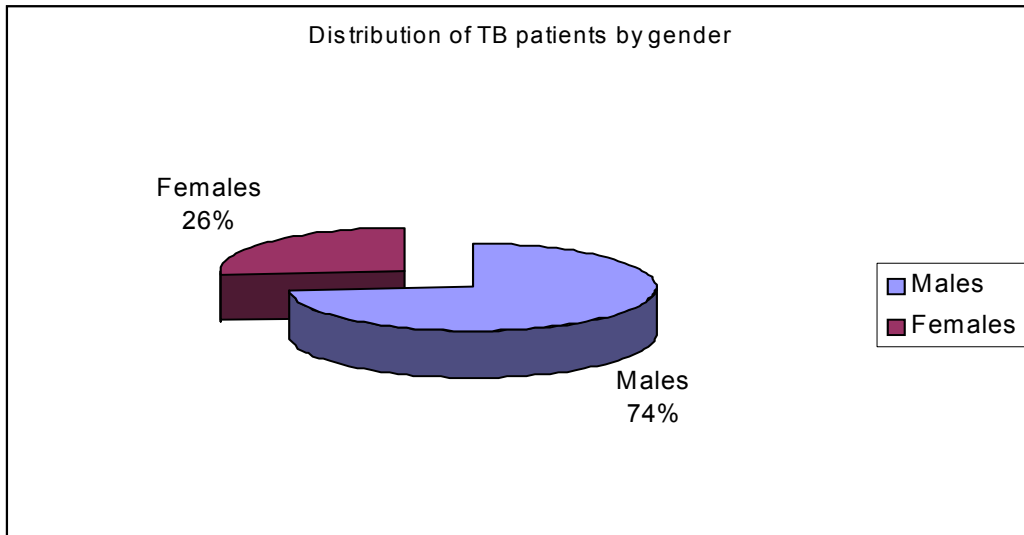
Table: Distribution of TB patients by age groups



Relatively more TB patients aged between 15-24 years 46% participated in the survey than any other group. 18% were from 25-29 years, 15% from 30-34 years, 4% from 35-39 years, 5 % from 40-44 years and 13 % from above 44 years

### 3.5.1.1 Distribution of TB patients by gender

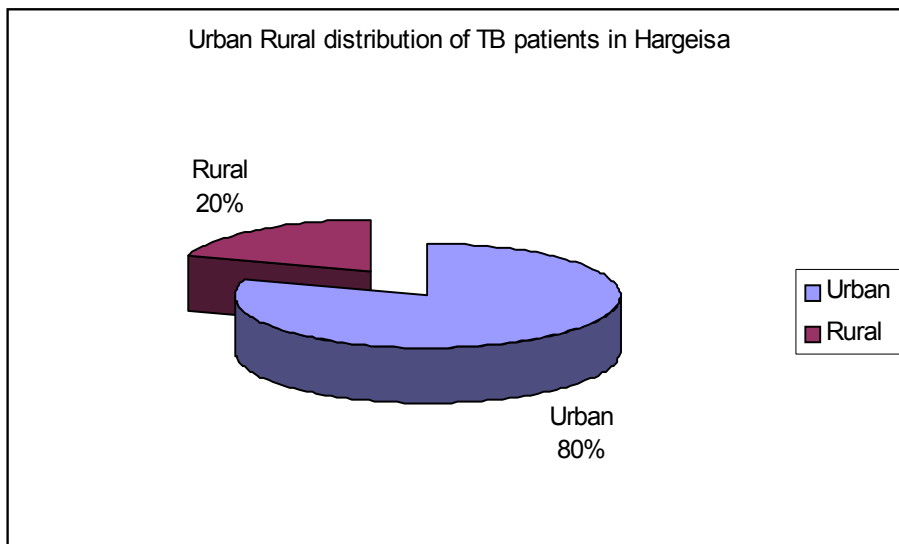
Figure 7: TB patients in Hargeisa by Gender



More males TB patients (74 %) than females (26%) participated in the survey.

### 3.5.1.2 Distribution of respondents by living status

Figure 9: Living Status of TB patients in Hargeisa



80% of the TB patients are from Hargeisa while 20% are from rural areas.



### 3.5.2 HIV Prevalence among TB patients

**Table 10: Overall HIV prevalence among TB patients**

No tested	No positive	% positive
249	14	5.6%

The overall HIV prevalence among TB patients was 5.6%.

### 3.5.3 HIV Prevalence by Gender among TB patients

**Table 11: Distribution of HIV prevalence by Gender**

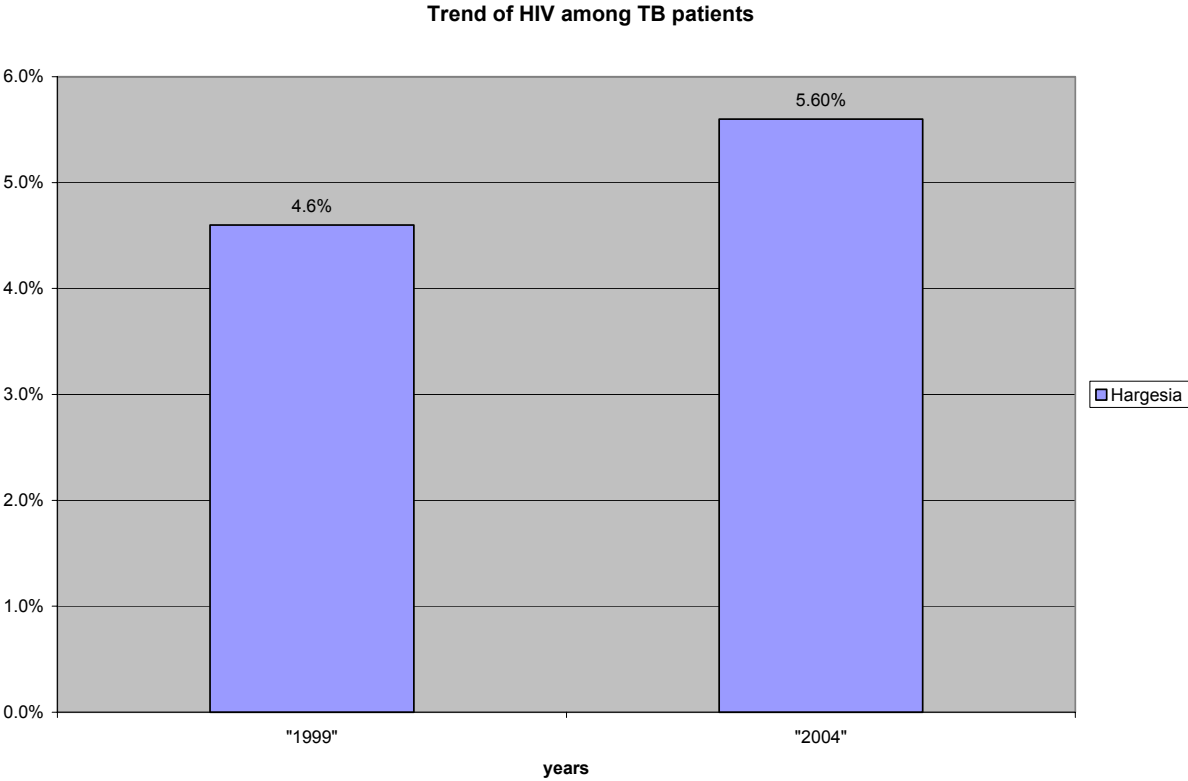
Gender	No tested	No positive	% positive
Male	184	8	4.3%
Females	65	6	9.2%
Total	249	14	5.6%

The HIV prevalence was found to be highest among females.

### Distribution of HIV prevalence among TB patients by age

Age Group	No tested	No Positive	Percentage Positive
15 – 24 years	114	5	1.8%
25 - 29 years	45	2	4.4%
30 - 34 years	36	3	8.3%
35 - 39 years	9	2	22.2%
40 - 44 years	13	1	7.7%
> 44 years	32	1	3.1%
Total	249	14	5.6%

### 3.5.4 Trend of HIV Prevalence among TB patients in Somaliland



The HIV prevalence among TB patients increased from 4.6% in 1999 to 5.6% in 2004.

### 3.6 Behavioural Determinants of the HIV/AIDS Epidemic

Based on UNICEF KABP studies in 1999 and 2004 specific behavioural information have been generated to interpret the determinants of the epidemic locally. Even though this data is limited to specific zones but can give a bird's eye view of the causes of the transmission of HIV infection. Some of the indicators selected for the purposes of this report are as follows:

**Table 12: Behavioural and treatment indicators**

1. HIV Prevention Indicators and baseline information		
Indicators	1999	2004
1. % (most-at-risk populations) who received HIV testing in the last 12 months and who know the results		
1. males	1% <sup>2</sup>	
2. women		Nil
2. % of people Have ever taken HIV test	Nil	
1. Males		4.8%
2. Females		2.5%
3. Willingness to take a test	Nil	
1. males		28.9%
2. Females		16.0%
4. % of sexually active male ever used condom 15-24yrs	Nil	12.7
5. % of sexually active female ever used condom 15-24yrs		5%
6. of (most-at-risk population(s)) who both correctly identify two ways of preventing the sexual transmission of HIV		
1. Male	Nil	Nil
2. Female	1.5	Nil
7. % of (most-at-risk population(s)) who both correctly reject major misconceptions about HIV transmission		

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF End of Decade Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 1999

1. Male		
2. Female	Nil	
	3.0%	
8. % of people willing to care for family with AIDS		68.9%
9. Median age at first sex	Nil	
1. Females		15yrs
2. Males		17yrs
<b>2. AIDS Treatment, Care and Support</b>		
10. Number of People on ART	Nil	11 <sup>3</sup>

From anecdotal evidence as shown by the above tables, there is limited data in the country on HIV/AIDS response indicators. From the data above, there is low knowledge, low protective behaviours and high prevailing stigma. There is also rudimentary treatment interventions provided through private hospital commitments. WHO in collaboration with UNAIDS, DFID and UNDP are developing the strategic plan of action on the Integration of prevention, treatment, care and support for those living with HIV/AIDS.

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<sup>3</sup> From anecdotal evidence (program monitoring data)

## CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSIONS

Due to the huge logistic, security, high capacity needs, and existing complex emergency situation for conducting sero-prevalence survey in Somaliland, a lot of efforts was put in place in terms of monitoring, supervising the operation and for quality assurance.:

The survey used rapid tests for HIV testing, two tests of different principals one with high sensitivity and the other with high specificity were used. All positive sera and 10% of negatives were tested by Eliza method in Nairobi. The indeterminate cases were further tested by Western Blot. For syphilis testing RPR screening kit and TPHA for confirmation were used. PCR method were used for detecting Gonorrhea and Chlamydia in urine, vaginal and cervical swabs.

The national median prevalence showed 1.7%, while the mean prevalence 1.4%. This a quantum increase compared with the 1999 Sero-prevalence survey that showed 0.9%. This indicates an emergence of a generalized infection in urban areas.

Reports from other countries, epidemiological and statistical experience, have shown that median prevalence is a better reflection of HIV prevalence in the country as a whole than using the national average. Mean Prevalence provide more skewed prevalence information and makes the results less accurate.

It is important to perceive HIV/AIDS as multiple epidemics, since sexual behaviors are not the same in all sites. Sentinel surveillance results can be applied confidently to target interventions to the selected populations and sites surveyed.

Sentinel results showed sentinel variations highest in Berbera 2.3% and lowest in Buroe 0.6%. No simple explanations can be offered for the variations observed. Possible factors that may have accounted for these differences include the following:

- Berbera is a port serving Somaliland, other parts of Somalia and neighbouring Ethiopia. Long distance truck transportation ends up in Berbera.
- Large number of dock workers detached from their families
- Low access to information and other interventions
- Low educational level

Further high risk group behavioural sentinel survey and other operational research is needed to explain the extent of the variations in the HIV transmission within the sentinel sites.

The HIV Prevalence by age groups among ANC attendants ranged from 0.1 in age >44yrs to 1.8% among age group 15-19yrs. HIV prevalence in young age group 15-19 years, is a cause of great worries and the need for immediate and vigorous response targeting young people. This age group is very critical as it is used as a proxy for incidence globally. The HIV prevalence among women in reproductive age groups 15-49 years show the potential and possibility of parent to child transmission going on in Somaliland. There is need to engage the communities to advocate for Prevention of mother to child transmission program implementation as quickly as possible.

The results of the survey indicate an HIV prevalence rate in the sites ranging from 0.6% in Burao and 2.3% in Berbera. This calls for scale-up prevention interventions in sites with prevalence less than 1% (Burao). Sites with prevalence above 1% have already gone into pockets of generalized epidemic and require more comprehensive and rapid interventions (Berbera, Hargesia and Boroma). Yet, it is possible to keep this epidemic in its present status and even lower through proven practical strategies and innovate approaches that suit Somaliland context..

Comparing Sero-prevalence of HIV between 1999 and 2004 using the median prevalence of 1.7% in 2004, and not the mean prevalence of 1.4%, it increased by 89%. Within the sentinel sites, Hargeisa HIV mean prevalence increased from 0.7% to 1.6% representing 128% increase. The reduction of prevalence in Borama from 1.6% in 1999 to 1.1% in 2004 may not be statistically significant and it may be attributed to relatively numerous HIV/AIDS interventions conducted in that area. The prevalence in Somaliland is highest in Berbera 2.3% followed by Hargeisa 1.6% followed by Borama 1.1% followed by Buroe 0.6%.

HIV among STIs patient in Hargeisa is alarmingly high (12.3%). It is difficult to explain this result. Definitely, the result is biased it is an intentional, unavoidable one.

The prevalence among TB patients of 5.6% confirms the emerging opportunistic infections. It increased from 4.6% in 1999 to 5.6% in 2004 representing an increase of over 21% in five years. This creates a new challenge in TB management. The TB prevalence is an indication that an integrated prevention, treatment, care and support intervention is over due in Somaliland.

The HIV prevalence among blood donors ranged from 0.8% since 1995 to 1.2% in 2004.

Syphilis prevalence among ANC attendants was found to be 1.3%. It was higher in older women than young pregnant women. There may be correlation between syphilis prevalence with the HIV prevalence.

Other evidence of STIs as a driving factor of this epidemic was shown by the prevalence of asymptomatic Gonorrhoea and Chlamydia infection 3.5%. If we aggregate that by age groups it is 5.3% among 15-24 years and (3.2%) among 15-19 years. This demonstrates clearly the need to review the Syndromic management algorithms and the threat STIs may pose in future for facilitating HIV infection.

The existing challenges are to ensure that the epidemic remains at this level or further reduced. From anecdotal evidence, there is currently high vulnerability factors in the country, aggravated by extensive mobility, poverty, literacy, poor infection control and nutrition. To successfully curb this epidemic the interventions must be actively and aggressively instituted utilizing the Sero-prevalence surveillance data.

## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This report presents detailed information about the prevalence of HIV/STIs in Somaliland in 2004. It also presents review of the results of the 1999 survey conducted and existing behavioural surveillance data for improved understanding of the epidemic. The results of this survey are presented by sentinel sites. There have been variations in the trend of HIV prevalence over the years among ANC and TB sentinel groups

The median prevalence of HIV among ANC attending MCH clinics in 2004 was 1.7%. Three sites out of four showed HIV prevalence rate of more than 1%. Syphilis prevalence was found to be 1.3% among ANC attendants. In addition to HIV/Syphilis surveillance STIs prevalence study was conducted among ANC attendants and STIs patients.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are hereby made:

1. **Map out risk factors among vulnerable groups:** This necessitates planning for KAPB surveys targeting the respective groups.
2. **Conduct HIV/Syphilis Sero-prevalence surveillance among vulnerable groups and STIs prevalence studies:** Beside the KAPB surveys, there will be need to conduct HIV surveillance to form baseline information for vulnerable groups.
3. **Biannual HIV Surveillance among ANC and TB patients:** Since surveillance is the continuous monitoring of a disease situation over a period of time, there will be need to repeat this exercise on two yearly basis.
4. **HIV Projections and Estimation:** The HIV prevalence results among ANC attendants should be utilized to make estimates of the national prevalence of HIV/AIDS and future projections. This must be done through consensus building process and through consultation with global and national partners.
5. **Scale-up Prevention and Treatment Intervention:** We must increase our commitment to scale-up preventive interventions especially in places where the HIV prevalence is less than 1%. The urgent implementation of the proposed Integrated Prevention, Treatment, care and Support Action Plan, will go along to reduce the incidence of infection alongside other prevention measures. Of high importance is the urgent need for the adaptation of the protocols, guidelines as well as management of STIs. Finally the implementation of prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT) should be instituted without delay. We must also ensure that all transfused blood is safe.
6. **Scale up of Treatment of Tuberculosis:** The TB centers must be used to provide treatment to the dual infection of TB and HIV/AIDS using the DOTS strategy and ART.