

South African businesses lead the way on tackling HIV/AIDS

In anticipation of World AIDS Day on 1 December 2008, EIRIS has published new research exploring the business response to HIV/AIDS with a particular focus on the largest Companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE).

[*'Positive corporate responses to HIV/AIDS: a snapshot of large cap South African companies'*](#)

provides an overview of the impact of HIV/AIDS on businesses and discusses the various steps being taken to establish a comprehensive strategy covering awareness, prevention and treatment programmes for employees and the community at large.

The rate of HIV infection continues to grow with 7.7 million new infections recorded globally in 2007. Rates of infection in sub-Saharan Africa are particularly high, with South Africa alone experiencing a 18% rise in new infection rates in 2007.

As part of a broader programme of emerging market research and working with the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE), EIRIS' latest report analyses the corporate response to HIV/AIDS of large cap companies listed on the FTSE/JSE Top 40 Index. EIRIS' research highlights encouraging developments in how South African companies are tackling HIV. These include increased access to effective treatment, education and prevention programmes.

Key findings include:

- Over 90% of companies provide employee access to effective treatment and prevention programmes
- Over 70% of companies provide HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment programmes to local communities
- Mining and financial sectors have the most advanced strategies on HIV/AIDS

- While Companies perform well on HIV/AIDS strategy, performance on training is weaker

In addition to highlighting the significant steps which South African companies have taken to address HIV/AIDS as it relates to their business, EIRIS research also outlines key steps which investors can take to encourage other companies to tackle the risks associated with HIV/AIDS. These include:

- Engaging with companies in other countries where HIV/AIDS is a risk
- Encouraging companies to engage with broader stakeholders, including government, NGOs, industry bodies and their supply chains to share and enhance best practice
- Engaging with South African small and mid cap companies beyond Top 40

Stephanie Maier, Head of research at EIRIS said “Corporate best practice on HIV/AIDS is a continually evolving field. It’s really encouraging to see South African companies invest in awareness, prevention and treatment programmes for employees and the community at large. These case studies can be used for investors to help them engage with companies in other regions around the world to encourage them to adopt best practice on helping to tackle HIV/AIDS”

Click [here](http://www.eiris.org/files/research%20publications/hivaidsbriefingnov08.pdf) (<http://www.eiris.org/files/research%20publications/hivaidsbriefingnov08.pdf>) to access the full research

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Notes to editors

1) About EIRIS

EIRIS is a leading global provider of independent research into the environmental, social governance (ESG) and ethical performance of companies. With over 25 years experience of conducting research and promoting responsible investment strategies, EIRIS now provides services to more than 100 asset owners and asset managers globally. In the last ten years new EIRIS research has focussed on the risks and exposure of companies in key ESG areas, and how companies are responding. EIRIS works with clients to create their own ESG ratings and rankings, to engage with companies and to create specific funds for their clients. EIRIS has a multinational team of over 50 staff in London, together with offices in Boston and Paris. The EIRIS network includes research organisations in Australia, France, Israel, Germany, Spain & South Korea, and now covers over 2,800 companies globally.

2) About JSE SRI Index

The JSE’s Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) Index was launched in May 2004 in response to the burgeoning debate around sustainability globally and particularly in the South African context. The SRI Index was a pioneering initiative – the first of its kind in an emerging market, and the first to be launched by an exchange, and has been a driver for increased attention to responsible investment into emerging markets like South Africa (www.jse.co.za/sri.) EIRIS is the data provider for the JSE SRI index. EIRIS has worked with the JSE on a review of Index criteria and construction, to ensure that the Index maintains its leading role in both encouraging broad based sustainability practice by companies and fostering consensus on what this means in the context of South Africa. The Index criteria include requirements for HIV/AIDS.

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