



## **PLACE: Social Mapping tracks where HIV is contracted**

### **Highlights**

**S&T Innovation:** Mapping sites where HIV is concentrated to ensure interventions are available where needed.

**Sector:** Global Health

**Development Challenge:** HIV/AIDS

**Location:** South Africa (pilot site)

**Potential for Replication:** Replicated in 29 countries in 100 target areas. Currently being implemented in Uganda.

**Implementing Partner:** University of North Carolina

**Host Country Counterpart:** South Africa Ministry of Health

**Other Donors:** CDC, Global Fund, WHO, World Bank

**Other Partners:** FHI 360, NIH, Government of Jamaica, STD Control Center of China, UNAIDS, PSI

Although HIV-AIDS has plagued the planet for more than three decades, the patterns of its transmission still pose important questions for researchers. Since 1999, Dr. Sharon Weir has been observing how and where people contract HIV, with a dogged determination to map the sites where the disease is actually contracted, rather than where people eventually seek treatment.

This complex process was recently made easier through the application of geographic information systems (GIS) and Google Earth. The USAID project, Priorities for Local AIDS Control Efforts (PLACE), applies this technology to map points of contact and identify geographic 'hot spots' where there is a higher likelihood of people having sex with new partners.

PLACE, which is currently being deployed in Uganda following successful application in South Africa, has been replicated in 29 countries and has mapped 100 target areas. PLACE maps are created using multiple data sources, including thorough and extensive interviews. In addition to tracking and mapping sexual partner meeting sites, PLACE also monitors the locations where intravenous drug users assemble and are more likely to share needles.

Initially, PLACE used aerial photographs, produced on large printers and patched together with tape. The process was time consuming, expensive and physically cumbersome. Now, using stand-alone software that does not require Internet access, the information on high-density transmission sites can be split into several overlapping maps. All maps are now available digitally, and the project has the additional benefit of building the computer capabilities of the national staff.

Once created, the maps are used to ensure that treatment and interventions are readily available