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**Centre for the Study of AIDS**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **A path-breaking new publication on the impact of AIDS in South Africa**

Pretoria – An AIDS epidemic as severe as the one plowing through South Africa will change society. But how and along what lines? *Buckling: The impact of AIDS in South Africa*, a new publication by Hein Marais, tackles the question in distinctive and critical-minded fashion – and arrives at disquieting and surprising conclusions.

A detailed, multidisciplinary review of research evidence, this short book adopts a unique perspective which reveals more clearly the contingency and complexity of the epidemic's effects. It shows how conventional conceptions of AIDS impact (and programme responses) tend to reflect dominant ideological fixations – particularly the overriding emphasis on productive processes and economic growth, governance and security – and how the wellbeing of humans typically is refracted through those preoccupations. Many accounts of AIDS impact, Marais demonstrates, are misdirected. They ignore the distribution of risk and responsibility in society, and skirt the interplay of the epidemic with the dynamics that determine the distribution of power, resources and entitlements. As a result, they underplay the inordinate extent to which the epidemic's burdens are being deflected onto, and concentrated among the least-privileged sections of society – causing even harsher polarization and petrifying social arrangements. Commonplace understandings of the epidemic's impact and of the kinds of strategies that could contain and repair the damage, Buckling argues, must be revised.

The Introduction of Buckling positions South Africa's epidemic and its anticipated impact in a wider historical and ideological context. Chapter Two ('Gauging the epidemic') examines the epidemiological evidence and the controversies surrounding it.

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Chapter Three ('Ground Zero') reviews and critiques the customary narratives of AIDS impact on households, of orphan-hood and of home-based care, and shows how the epidemic is accentuating and hardening some of the most grievous features of society. Chapter Four ('Fall-out') pans wider to scan and critique the popularized images of societal impact, offers an alternative analysis of AIDS impact in South Africa, and proposes a minimum social package to reduce the damage.

To download this new publication please visit: <http://www.csa.za.org/filemanager/fileview/101/>

**About the author:**

Hein Marais is a South African writer and journalist. He is the author of, among other publications, the book *South Africa: Limits to Change – the political economy of transition* (Juta/Zed, 2001) and the multidisciplinary review of HIV/AIDS policy in South Africa, *To the Edge* (2000), co-author of the United Nations' 2002 *Report on the Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic* (2002), and has been principal author of the annual United Nations' *AIDS Epidemic Update* for the last five years.

**About the Centre for the Study of AIDS**

The Centre for the Study of AIDS (CSA) is located at the University of Pretoria. It is a 'stand alone' centre which is responsible for the development and co-ordination of a comprehensive University-wide response to AIDS. The Centre operates in collaboration with the Deans of all Faculties and through Interfaculty committees to ensure that a professional understanding of the epidemic is developed through curriculum innovation as well as through extensive research.

Support for students and staff is provided through peer-based education and counselling, through support groups and through training in HIV/AIDS in the workplace. A large number of student volunteers are involved in the programme, as are many community groups, ASOs and NGOs.

To create a climate of debate and critique, the Centre publishes widely and hosts AIDS Forums and seminars. It has created web- and email-based debate and discussion forums and seeks to find new, innovative, creative and effective ways to address HIV/AIDS in South African society.

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