

AFRICA: THE RAGING EPIDEMIC

UNAIDS estimates that of the approximately 36 million men, women, and children living with HIV/AIDS, a staggering 25 million (71% of the world AIDS population) live in sub-Saharan Africa. Women are at a higher risk than men in this region, comprising 55% of all cases. Working towards curbing these statistics are groups such as the United Nations AIDS program (UNAIDS), whose annual budget is \$60 million dollars. UNAIDS includes donors from a range of nations such as the United States, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, China, Thailand and South Africa. Although UNAIDS and various programs have worked successfully in regions of Africa, most notably in Uganda, aggressive prevention and education is still needed.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the AIDS epidemic will reduce average life expectancy from 59 to 45 between 2005 and 2010, and from 61 to 33 in Zimbabwe. Throughout the region, the total number of people living with HIV/AIDS continues to rise due to the fact there are more newly infected individuals than AIDS-related deaths each year. The primary mode of transmission is through heterosexual sex and vertical transmission (from mother to child). HIV/AIDS is perhaps the most serious threat to future development in Africa. The cost of one year of basic healthcare for an individual living with HIV/AIDS is two to three times more than the average gross domestic product of many countries in Africa. Jeffery D. Sachs, director of the Center for International Development at Harvard University, notes that spending \$8 a year for each resident of the United States could provide needed health care and related services to address the AIDS pandemic in Africa. According to a recent poll, more than half of Americans believe the United States should forgive international loans in order for African nations to devote more resources to AIDS. The survey of 1,200 adults also found that 64% support using federal funds to aid Africa; more than 70% support funding education, prevention, treatment and care. The UN estimates that it costs 4 billion each year to fight HIV/AIDS worldwide.

Comparative Statistics as of December 2000:

	World Wide (including Africa)	Africa
New HIV infections in 2000	5.3 million	3.8 million
AIDS deaths in 2000	3 million	2.4 million
Children orphaned by AIDS	At least 13 million	At least 10 million

World Population = 6 billion

AIDS Threatens Infrastructure of Still-Developing Africa

The African workforce includes people living with HIV/AIDS and those at risk of HIV infection. AIDS has stunted the economy in Tanzania, where much of the work force is ill. Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa explains, "Some ministries lose about 20 employees each month of AIDS, and 365 workers of the Tanzania Electric Company died between 1995 and April [2000]". The shortage of skilled people may increase inflation throughout Africa. The American Foundation for AIDS Research noted in 1999 that 80 percent of those dying are workers between the ages of 20 and 50. In addition, the deaths of schoolteachers have eroded education systems in nations such as Senegal, Cote D'Ivoire, and the Central African Republic. UNAIDS found that 13,000 Zambian teachers died of AIDS during the first 10 months of 1998.

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan announced that AIDS has taken the lives of more Africans during 1999 than have all the wars on the continent. AIDS poses a significant threat to the infrastructure of developing nations. On May 1, 2000, President Clinton declared that AIDS poses a serious threat to national security, making it possible for the battle against HIV/AIDS to be spearheaded by the National Security Council. This declaration followed the UN AIDS Summit, during which Vice President Al Gore addressed the UN Security Council on the lasting impact of the AIDS pandemic around the world.

Profile of Regions

- In **Botswana** (pop. 1,576,470), three out of ten people ages 15 to 50 are infected with HIV. President Festus Mogae has urged citizens to alter their sexual behavior to stop the spread of AIDS in Botswana, where the average life expectancy has dropped from 69 to 45 in the past decade. Only 200 people in Botswana have access to antiviral drugs. Yet in some regions, more than half of all pregnant women have HIV. In response to this significant health threat, Bristol-Myers Squibb has funded a \$4.9 million laboratory in Gabarone, Botswana, where research on drugs and an AIDS vaccine will be conducted.
- **Kenya** (pop. 30,339,770) may host up to 8 million citizens infected with HIV/AIDS by 2002. By 1999, AIDS had orphaned 350,000 children. In addition, 75% of Kenyan sex workers are HIV-positive. However, increased awareness about HIV and AIDS has encouraged greater use of condoms in Kenya, up to 10 million condoms each month.
- **South Africa** (pop. 43,421,021) has the highest infection rate in the world, with 1,600 new cases each day and approximately 10 infections every minute; it is estimated that 4.2 million South Africans are currently infected with HIV. As infection rates peak, 20% of all working age individuals may be infected with HIV by 2005. In Cape Town, the infection rate of girls ages 15-19 years old is already 21%, a 65% increase from 1997. Schools in South Africa will soon begin offering HIV tests to school-aged children, with parental consent, in an effort to gauge the spread of HIV/AIDS. By treating pregnant women, medical professionals hope to stop the vertical transmission of HIV to newborns in South Africa, where 22% of pregnant women have HIV. As a result of the AIDS epidemic, the population growth rate is expected to drop by 71% over the next decade.

- In **Uganda** (pop. 23,317,560), one of every three mothers is infected with HIV and AIDS has orphaned 1.7 million children. One in every 4 families cares for an AIDS orphan. Only 852 of Uganda's 930,000 people living with HIV are obtaining antiretroviral drugs (AZT and 3TC) through UNAIDS. Food and proper nourishment are more important than treatment in Uganda, where the risk of contracting dysentery is high. Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni has worked to increase AIDS awareness by providing information and involvement at all levels of society. Currently, Uganda is one of the few countries in Africa with a successful AIDS prevention program, which is responsible for reducing the infection rate in Uganda from 35% to approximately 10%.

The AIDS pandemic continues to present a significant health risk to the global population, particularly sub-Saharan Africa where there are almost 4 million new HIV infections each year. In some areas, HIV is equally common among men and women, threatening the economic stability and national security of many developing countries. HIV/AIDS poses a grave threat to the future security and well being of the world. With increasing rates of HIV infection, AIDS threatens to destabilize entire nations if action is not taken immediately. Effective prevention programs and care initiatives require substantial funding, while the countries hit hardest by AIDS in Africa are among the poorest in the world.

December 2000

AIDS Action
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