

Global Health

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I ask pastoral workers "to bring to their brothers and sisters affected by AIDS all possible material, moral and spiritual comfort. I urgently ask the world's scientists and political leaders, motivated by the love and respect due to every human person, to use every means available in order to put an end to this scourge.
Pope John Paul II, World Day of the Sick, 2005.

The Issue:

HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other infectious diseases continue to devastate families and communities in the poorest countries throughout the world, especially in Africa. The Bush Administration's Global AIDS Initiative, for which Congress has provided \$2.8 billion in 2005, is an important step towards stemming global health crises. However, given the massive scale of the pandemic, and projections of the future impact of the disease, the U.S. must continue to expand its response.

Did You Know?

Today there are 39 million people living with HIV/AIDS around the world. Of this total, an estimated 25.4 million live in Africa, 3 million of them children.

Each day over 800 people living in Bombay become infected.

Africa buries 6,200 AIDS victims every day

Of the 39 million living with HIV/AIDS, 6 million in the developing world urgently need antiretroviral therapy and fewer than 7% are receiving it.

1 million deaths occur from malaria each year in Africa.

About 9 million tuberculosis cases occur each year—3 million in Southeast Asia and 2 million in sub-Saharan Africa.

Among young people aged 15-24, women are 2 ½ times as likely to be HIV-infected as their male counterparts.

By the year 2010, there will be an estimated 40 million children left orphan because of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases. (Sources: UNAIDS; Global Fund)

Background:

The impact of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, felt most deeply in the poorest countries, is leaving in its wake families and communities largely comprised of young orphans and the elderly. In countries such as Botswana and Swaziland where nearly 39% of the adult populations are infected with HIV/AIDS, fewer and fewer adults live to teach children basic life skills, to harvest crops and provide food, to deliver health care and other social services, to sustain the local and national economies and to keep communities secure. Inadequate nutrition further exacerbates the problem of HIV/AIDS by leaving people more susceptible to illness.

Women and children are particularly vulnerable to AIDS and other infectious diseases. Many societies limit the economic and social rights of women, and thus, they may lack the autonomy to refuse sex, even with an infected partner. Young children, especially girls, are also acutely vulnerable to infectious disease. Many children are born HIV positive, lack the nourishment needed to more readily fight off diseases such as

tuberculosis and malaria, or are victims of sexual exploitation and violence. Many young children are either orphaned or left to the care of aging and impoverished grandparents.

Experts predict that in 2010, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Russia, India and China will have a combined population of 50 to 75 million infected with HIV/AIDS. Combined these countries make up 40% of the world's population and a combined gross national product (GNP) of more than \$15 trillion. The enormity of the pandemic poses a great threat to global economic and political stability and in turn to our national security.

While enhanced nutrition and treatment for HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases can enable people to live much healthier, more dignified and longer lives, many in Africa and elsewhere continue to go hungry, and scandalously few people have access to life-saving drugs. In Africa, of the 25.4 million infected with HIV/AIDS, only 100,000, or less than 1%, are currently receiving treatment. The Holy See has long urged governments and drug companies to work together with international organizations to ensure that people in the poorest countries have greater access to cheaper, life-saving drugs.

The U.S. Response

- In January 2003, the Bush Administration promised that the U.S. would provide a total of \$15 billion in funding to fight global health crises from 2004 to 2008.
- In May 2003, Congress passed the Global AIDS Act, which authorized \$3 billion each year for 5 years to fight global health crises and included provisions for a more effective and morally appropriate global health program. The USCCB and CRS successfully advocated for the inclusion of important provisions in this law, including: increased debt relief for poor countries; an emphasis on abstinence and fidelity within marriage as part of prevention education; and the conscience clause, which ensures that religious organizations, like Catholic Relief Services, will not be discriminated against on the basis of moral convictions in the allocation of aid funds.
- Congress approved \$2.8 billion to fight HIV/AIDS and infectious diseases in 2005, an increase of over \$400 million above 2004 levels, but far short of what is required to meet the Administration's commitment of \$15 billion in total funding by 2008.

Elements of a responsibly designed global health strategy

- Funding for basic healthcare delivery systems, medicines, treatment and research.
- Care for those living with infectious diseases and for children orphaned as a result of those diseases, and programs to address stigma and discrimination.
- Programs to address not only HIV/AIDS but other life-threatening infectious diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis.
- Morally responsible HIV/AIDS prevention programs providing accurate information about HIV/AIDS transmission, promoting responsible and mutually respectful relationships, and addressing cultural norms and other relevant factors.
- Activities that strengthen the economic and social viability of affected communities.
- Priority consideration for countries in sub-Saharan Africa, paying special attention to the care and treatment of orphans and children and utilizing food aid to help sustain lives and the productivity of working adults.

See USCCB Testimony on 2003 Foreign Assistance and the August 2001 Letter from Cardinal Bernard Law to Representative Hyde.

Experts estimate that in 2005 alone, meeting the global need to fight HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria will cost \$15 billion. By 2007, at least \$20 billion will be required.

USCCB/CRS Position:

We commend Congress and the President for providing a significant increase in the U.S. contribution to fight HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria in 2005. However, in order to help meet the Administration's commitment and respond to actual needs, we urge Congress to do the following:

- Provide a substantial increase in FY2006 funding for morally responsible programs to combat HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, with particular attention to Africa, and for programs that

- provide economic and educational opportunities for women and young girls. Additional funds also should be provided for the Global Fund.
- Seek additional resources in 2005 for the Title II Food for Peace program to provide better nutrition for HIV/AIDS patients.
 - Continue to protect those existing provisions of law, including the conscience clause, that reflect a more responsibly designed global health strategy.

For further information: Fr. Michael Perry, OFM, Office of International Justice and Peace, USCCB, 202-541-3149, mperry@usccb.org; LaVita Strickland, Office of Government Liaison, USCCB; Kathy Brown, Catholic Relief Services 410-625-2220, kbrown@catholicrelief.org or Tina Rodousakis, Catholic Relief Services 410-951-7462, trodousa@catholicrelief.org.