



A Global Health Initiative **FACT-SHEET**

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Investing in Global Health Research: HIV/AIDS

Every day, 8,500 lives are lost to AIDS, and an additional 13,500 people become infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.¹

HIV/AIDS has been recognized as a threat to both the health and national security of many countries. It was the first health crisis to garner the attention of the United Nations Security Council. Here in the United States, many people tend to think of HIV/AIDS as a disease that primarily affects people living in Africa. But the truth is, because HIV/AIDS is a global health crisis, Americans have much more at stake than we realize.

HIV/AIDS Affects the United States

HIV/AIDS has had a significant impact on our nation, both directly and indirectly. AIDS has claimed more than 500,000 lives in the U.S., and it is the leading cause of death among African American women ages 25 to 34.² With 40,000 new HIV infections a year, the U.S. is quickly losing both lives and resources to this disease.

"AIDS responses are not matching the shift in the epidemic in North America ... there is an urgent need for improved HIV prevention, diagnosis and treatment services."

-UNAIDS 2006 World AIDS Report

Beyond its direct toll in terms of lost lives and productivity, HIV/AIDS also affects the United States indirectly as it spreads throughout the world.

HIV/AIDS Is a Threat to Global Stability

- HIV/AIDS leads to economic decline and potential social and political unrest. In the most severely affected regions of Africa, HIV/AIDS has reduced life expectancy to 40 years.
 - Parental illness and death are leaving millions of children to fend for themselves. The resulting demographic shift creates a "youth-bulge," which puts pressure on society and increases the risk of civil unrest and conflict.³
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HIV/AIDS Has Far-Reaching Economic Consequences

- HIV/AIDS lowers the productivity of workers, reducing the economic growth potential of many developing countries.
- The resulting economic decline in these countries has a significant impact on the rest of the world, including the United States, as 45 percent of U.S. exports are purchased by developing nations.⁴
- Many countries are turning to Russia and countries in Africa as alternate exporters of key resources such as petroleum and minerals.⁵ However, the economic stability of these countries is uncertain, as HIV/AIDS exacerbates labor shortages and increases the costs of production.

The Impact of HIV/AIDS Is Growing

- HIV/AIDS is rapidly spreading to other parts of the world.
- It is already spiraling out of control in Asia and parts of Eastern Europe.

AIDS Is a Crisis of Global Proportions

- Since HIV/AIDS was identified in 1981, 65 million people have been infected, and 25 million of them have died.
- In 2005, 4 million people were newly infected with HIV.
- In the United States, an estimated 1.2 million people are living with HIV/AIDS, and 40,000 new HIV infections are diagnosed annually.
- In Nigeria, 2.9 million people are HIV positive.
- In South Africa, 5.5 million people – 20 percent of the population – are estimated to be HIV positive.
- In India, 5.7 million people are HIV positive.

Source: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), *2006 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2006).

“The global HIV/AIDS epidemic is an unprecedented crisis that requires an unprecedented response. In particular it requires solidarity – between the healthy and the sick, between rich and poor, and above all, between richer and poorer nations.”

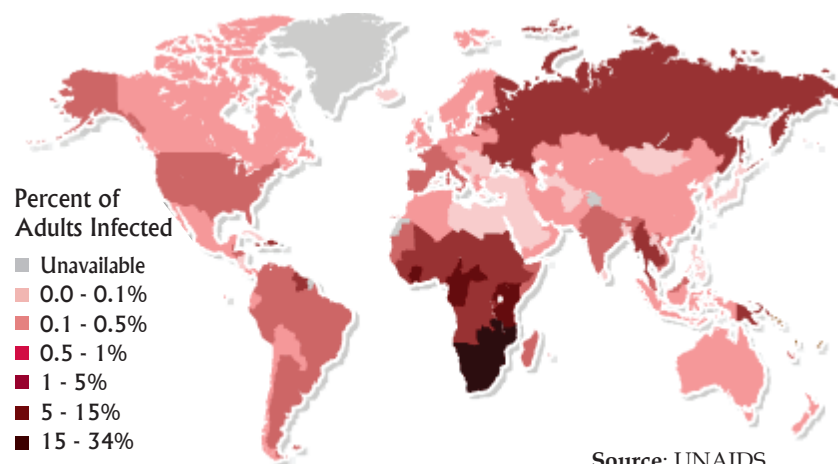
- Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary General

Addressing the Challenge of HIV/AIDS

Progress has been made in the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, but there is still more work to be done. More than 20 drugs have been approved to slow the spread of HIV, but the battle is not won yet—these treatments have severe side effects, and many patients eventually develop drug resistance. The current drugs provide hope, and years of life, but they are not a cure, and they are not a permanent solution to the AIDS epidemic.

In the United States, AIDS is no longer a death sentence. Someone with HIV can expect to live for many years with the virus under control. However, worldwide, only 20 percent of HIV/AIDS patients are receiving the drugs they need.⁶ Drug therapies are often unaffordable, particularly for people living in poorer countries.

Worldwide HIV Infection Rates for Adults, 2005



Source: UNAIDS

The global epidemic is not showing any signs of halting. Effective prevention methods are key to reversing this trend.

To Turn the Tide against AIDS, We Must Prevent New Infections

The number of new HIV infections continues to grow, outpacing current efforts to provide treatment. For every person receiving treatment, 10 more become infected.⁷ The key to curbing the growth of this devastating epidemic is preventing new infections.

Historically, vaccines have been the most effective weapons against disease. Creating an effective, affordable vaccine is the best possible tool for preventing new HIV infections and saving millions of lives.

Another preventive strategy currently under development is the use of microbicides—products that are applied topically to prevent the transmission of HIV. Development of microbicides is especially important for women—a host of social and economic factors

limit women's ability to negotiate condom use and safer sex practices. Microbicides would empower women to protect themselves against HIV infection, freeing them from needing the consent of their partners.

Vaccines, microbicides, and other preventive methods have the potential to end the devastation caused by AIDS. But a substantial investment is needed to develop these lifesaving products.

What Can the United States Do?

- **The U.S. should continue to show leadership**

The United States has provided leadership in the global fight against AIDS through its investments in the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and research into the biomedical technologies used to combat AIDS. The United States must also continue to partner with other developed nations, as well as developing nations, to apply scientific and medical advances to the challenges of the developing world. Continued investment by the United States will ensure that America maintains its position as a leader in medical and health innovation.

- **Investing in research yields valuable returns**

U.S. investments in global health research and development are primarily coordinated through NIH. NIH allocates \$2.8 billion a year – 10 percent of its annual budget – to HIV/AIDS. However, only \$675 million – less than 25 percent – is spent on research for preventive methods like vaccines and microbicides.⁸

Vaccines and other medical technologies are the most cost-efficient solutions to the problem of HIV/AIDS. However, without more research, our current efforts will not be sustainable. Without our dedication and leadership, more generations will be lost to HIV/AIDS, and its devastating social and economic effects will be far greater, both for the United States and for the international community.

¹ Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), *2006 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2006).

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), *National Vital Statistics Report* 53, no. 17 (Atlanta: CDC, 2005).

³ Laurie Garrett, *HIV and National Security: Where are the Links?* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2005).

⁴ Center for Global Development (CGD), *Rich World, Poor World: A Guide to Global Development* (Washington: CGD, 2006).

⁵ Laurie Garrett, *op. cit.*

⁶ World Health Organization (WHO), *Progress on Global Access to HIV Antiretroviral Therapy: A Report on "3x5" and Beyond* (Geneva: WHO, 2006).

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ National Institutes of Health (NIH), *Estimates of Funding for Various Diseases, Conditions, Research Areas* (Bethesda, MD: NIH, 2006), available online at <http://www.nih.gov/news/fundingresearchareas.htm>.