

FIGHT AIDS

DROP THE DEBT TO FIGHT GLOBAL AIDS

IMAGINE A PLACE WHERE CHILDREN HAVE NO PARENTS, SCHOOLS HAVE NO TEACHERS, HOSPITALS HAVE NO DOCTORS AND BUSINESSES HAVE NO WORKERS. FOR THE 2.35 BILLION PEOPLE LIVING IN IMPOVERISHED COUNTRIES, THIS ISN'T AN IMAGINATION, THIS IS THE REALITY OF THE DESTRUCTION CAUSED BY AIDS.

HIV/AIDS is indeed a global epidemic. Sub-Saharan Africa is the worst affected region in the world, followed by the Caribbean where Haiti—with a debt burden of \$1.3 billion, has an adult HIV prevalence rate of 3.8 percent. In Asia and Eastern Europe, HIV rates are rapidly rising. In 2005, 2.8 million people died of AIDS-related diseases. Millions more will die unless drastic action is taken now.

Wealthy countries like the United States can help stop the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS by lifting the burden of unjust debt in impoverished countries and providing affordable medications and funds for education, care and treatment. In 2007, the world community needs to invest more than \$18 billion to fight HIV/AIDS and other diseases such as tuberculosis and malaria around the world. Currently, low-income countries pay out \$100 million a day in debt repayments. Simply, this doesn't add up.

A DISEASE OF POVERTY: AIDS IN AFRICA

The continent of Africa is home to 34 of the 48 most impoverished countries in the world. It is no coincidence that it is also the continent most plagued by HIV/AIDS. Sub-Saharan Africa holds only 12 percent of the world's population, yet accounts for 64 percent of persons currently infected.

In rich countries, most people with HIV/AIDS live well for years. This is primarily because they have access to good health care and medication. Most Africans, unfortunately, lack these things. Their governments, thanks to two decades of structural adjustment programs, cannot afford to fund even the most basic health care or provide the essential antiretroviral treatment drugs.

Ninety percent of all children living with HIV/AIDS live in Sub-Saharan Africa and less than 1 in 10 are being reached by basic support services. This fact is directly related to the reality that countries have to pay for debt service instead of health care.

A GLOBAL EFFORT

In 2005, world leaders came together at the Group of Eight (G-8) meetings and committed to canceling the debt for some of the most heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) in the world. The G-8 also committed to work towards universal access to AIDS prevention, care, and treatment by 2010, following the call of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals to end extreme poverty by 2015. We are frighteningly close to this date, yet far from achieving this goal.

World leaders have made commitments to fight this virus, but have not taken the bold action that is necessary. The limited debt cancellation that 20 countries, 16 of them in Africa, have obtained in 2006 under the G-8 agreement is only a first step—and an insufficient one. The six countries with the highest HIV/AIDS infection rates have received zero



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debt cancellation under the agreement. Of the 60 countries most burdened by AIDS, debt and poverty, the G-8 debt cancellation only amounts to 13 percent of their total debt.

DEBT, STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT & HIV/AIDS

To qualify for debt relief, countries are often forced to implement harmful economic programs dictated by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. Much of the debt is owed to these two public institutions, which were designed to help reduce and prevent poverty. However, their policies—such as the privatization of basic services, budgetary spending restrictions, removing subsidies, and trade liberalization—undermine the fight against poverty and global AIDS.

ONE PROBLEMATIC REFORM

is the IMF's restriction of national budgets and wages. The IMF imposes limits on spending, which often leads countries to make cuts in sectors that need money the most. As a result, countries cannot invest sufficiently in the health sector, hire enough doctors or nurses, or pay competitive wages to retain their trained professionals.

Uganda could only use \$186 million of a \$201 million grant from the Global Fund to Fight

AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria because of public spending ceilings. In Kenya, IMF conditions prevented the hiring of thousands of unemployed nurses in 2003. Many governments have also been forced to cut the number of clinics they support and often must charge user fees at existing ones. As many people cannot afford user fees, they are unable to visit clinics. The IMF and World Bank also support global trade policies that hurt rural economies, limiting access in impoverished countries to generic and inexpensive anti-retroviral drugs.

BECOME PART OF THE SOLUTION

The AIDS crisis is unparalleled in its devastating effects on lives and communities. We need substantial resources to combat it now and payments on external debt divert essential funds for treatment and prevention of the virus. Given the illegitimate origins of much of the debt in impoverished countries, broader debt cancellation is not only a question of human need, but also a matter of justice. Full debt cancellation for impoverished countries without harmful economic conditions will not by itself solve the problem, but it is an important piece of any comprehensive solution to address the challenges of prevention and treatment of HIV and AIDS. Join us now to drop the debt to fight global AIDS!

TO LEARN MORE & GET INVOLVED VISIT:

WWW.STOPGLOBALAIDS.ORG AND WWW.JUBILEEUSA.ORG

JUBILEE USA PARTNERS WHO WORK ON GLOBAL AIDS ISSUES

African Services Committee **Health Gap Coalition**
www.africanservices.org www.healthgap.org

Africa Action
www.africaaction.org

Global AIDS Alliance
www.globalaidsalliance.org

Student Global AIDS Campaign
www.fightglobalaids.org

Global Justice
www.globaljusticenow.org

Sources: *Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic*, UNAIDS, 2006; *World Development Indicators*, 2006; *G-8 Inaction Betrays People with AIDS*, KAIROS Global Justice, July 2006; *The Unfinished Agenda on International Debt*, Jubilee USA Network, July 2006; Shacinda, Shapi, *Zambia to Put Debt Relief into AIDS Fight*, Reuters, June 20 2005; *Paying the Price: Why Rich Countries Must Invest Now in a War on Poverty*, Oxfam International, 2005; *Facts and Statistics on Debt*, Jubilee Debt Campaign, 2006.