

HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is not just a health issue. In developing countries poverty is a major driving force behind the spread of HIV. The developing world accounts for 95 per cent of people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide, and 95 per cent of all deaths from HIV-related illnesses.

The impact of HIV/AIDS has huge repercussions for development. Under-resourced healthcare systems are buckling under the strain. Businesses and schools are suffering as staff are lost to HIV-related illnesses; Zambia loses five teachers every day to HIV/AIDS. Sub-Saharan Africa, is bearing the brunt of the HIV crisis, but HIV is also spreading rapidly in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Number of people living with HIV/AIDS:

Sub-Saharan Africa	29.4 million
Latin America	1.5 million
South and Southeast Asia	6.1 million
Caribbean	0.44 million
Others	4.65 million
Total	42 million

Source: UNAIDS report, December 2002

Poverty

The spread of HIV is both a consequence and, in part, a cause of poverty. HIV primarily affects the most productive sector of society, and in cases of prolonged illness, livelihoods are lost, impacting on all family members. Resources are diverted to healthcare, school fees cannot be paid, and children, particularly girls, are taken out of education to tend to sick relatives. Christian Aid is calling on world leaders to meet their 1970 United Nations pledge to devote 0.7 per cent of Gross National Product (GNP) in aid to tackle HIV/AIDS. In the case of the UK, this would release an additional



Christian Aid/Karen Ward

Secondary schools students in Ghana have formed an 'anti-AIDS club' to teach their peers about HIV/AIDS through dance

£3.5 (US\$2.5) billion a year – more than enough to provide basic care to all those living with HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa and basic preventative education. Dealing with HIV/AIDS means tackling poverty.

Faith-based organisations

Faced with cutbacks health and education spending, civil society has taken the strain. With their highly organised grassroots networks, churches and faith-based organisations are in an excellent position to increase HIV awareness and provide care and support to those who are ill, as well as to children orphaned by AIDS. In addition to providing care and support to people living with HIV/AIDS and others affected by it, some churches are now training the clergy to talk about HIV/AIDS, and are developing theological resources to help them do so.

Access to treatment

There is no cure for HIV and treatment remains expensive. Generic antiretroviral drugs cost approximately £200 per person per year and therefore remain out of reach of the majority of people living with HIV, who live on less than US\$2 (£1.40) per day.

Signs of hope

Although the HIV epidemic is far from under control, there are signs of hope. Uganda has achieved an impressive reduction in prevalence rates in the last decade. Strong political and religious leadership, increased education and care at community level, and a willingness to fight the stigma often associated with HIV/AIDS, all have crucial roles to play.

What is Christian Aid doing?

Christian Aid has an HIV unit which coordinates HIV activities across the organisation and with partners.

Christian Aid supports more than 100 partner organisations working on HIV prevention and care. It also encourages partner organisations to incorporate an HIV/AIDS focus into other aspects of their development work.

Healthcare and support

Christian Aid is funding many community-based healthcare programmes, particularly in rural areas. These projects provide essential services that the state often lacks the resources to provide.

In the north of Zambia, Christian Aid partner organisation the Ndola Catholic Diocese trains nurses and community health workers to provide home-based care for the chronically ill. Working from 27 centres, the project now has more than 700 volunteers, many of whom are living with HIV/AIDS.

Education

To stop the spread of HIV, preventative education is vital, particularly for young people. One of Christian Aid's most exciting and innovative education and awareness programmes is the Jamaica AIDS Support project, which encourages young people to learn about HIV/AIDS through dance, music and drama, and to prevent HIV infection in inner-city communities. Another Christian Aid partner in Brazil, Gapa-Bahia, runs a travelling women's health theatre, which presents educational performances in poor communities in the northeast of the country.

Empowerment

People living with HIV/AIDS are often stigmatised, and in some cases ostracised, by their families and communities.

Christian Aid partners provide emotional support and counselling, and try to improve their self-respect by giving them the means to earn a living.

Fondation Femme Plus (FFP) in the Democratic Republic of Congo runs income-generating projects with HIV-positive women, many of them widows. FFP promotes a philosophy of positive life for people living with HIV/AIDS, and encourages non-HIV-positive people to show 'love, tolerance and solidarity' to people living with HIV/AIDS.

Orphans and vulnerable children

HIV/AIDS has already orphaned 15 million children. As many as 28 million more could be orphaned in the next ten years. This means generations are growing up without parents. Without the appropriate life skills, these children will not be equipped as adults to drive the economic engine of their countries, making the struggle for development and growth even tougher. Christian Aid supports projects which care for orphans and vulnerable children in their communities.

HIV in post-conflict countries

People living in countries emerging from war are often particularly vulnerable to

HIV as health and education infrastructures are poor. Christian Aid is integrating HIV activities into its development work in Angola, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Tackling poverty

Christian Aid believes there are no excuses for rich nations standing by, apparently indifferently, as HIV spreads in the developing world. The only long-term way to deal with the HIV/AIDS crisis in these countries is to tackle the poverty that allows it to flourish. This requires a combination of policies, including changing trade rules and cancelling unpayable debt. But these policies alone will not be enough and will take time to bear fruit. Resources are desperately needed now.

- The UK must more than double its aid to meet the UN target of 0.7 per cent of GNP within ten years.
- All developed countries must also meet the 0.7 per cent target within ten years – releasing an extra £70 million annually for development.

What you can do

- Make a donation to Christian Aid's HIV/AIDS fund to support its partners' programmes worldwide.
- Write to your MP at the House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA, demanding the UK meets the 0.7 per cent target.

1 Please accept my gift to 'The Christian Aid HIV/AIDS Fund'; a donation of:
 £250 £100 £25 £10 Other £ _____

2

Name

Address

Postcode

3 I enclose a cheque/postal order payable to Christian Aid
OR I wish to donate by card:
 CAF card Switch † MasterCard AMEX VISA
 † If using Switch, please add the issue number in the boxes below.
 My account number is
 Card expiry date / Issue number (Switch only)
 Signature Date

4 **Taxpayers**

I am a UK taxpayer and want Christian Aid to claim back the tax on all donations I have made from 6 April 2000 and all donations I make in the future.

yes* no (please tick)

Date

* You must pay an amount of income tax or capital gains tax equal to the tax we reclaim on your donations. (28p for every £1 you give)

5 Please send me information about
 regular giving campaigning
Please return to Christian Aid at one of the addresses below.