

HUMAN RIGHTS INDEX

*Prepared by the University of Iowa Center for Human Rights (UICHR)**

Though temporarily treatable, HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) commonly results in AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), a deadly disease that has spread to every country in the world. It is most prevalent, however, in sub-Saharan Africa, which is home to 10% of the world's population but approximately 65% of all people who are HIV-positive—roughly 26 million persons. HIV is transmitted largely by incautious sexual activity, unsterile drug practices, and contact with contaminated blood; its transmission rate is exacerbated by poverty, unemployment, malnutrition, inadequate health care and education, certain customs and rituals, and high rates of sexual violence. The high transmission rate is a consequence also of the subjugation of women. Commonly denied political, economic, and cultural status, women are left vulnerable to the disease and to passing it onto their progeny during pregnancy and breast-feeding. In 2001, concerned at the scale and impact of HIV/AIDS worldwide, the UN General Assembly declared the disease to be “a global emergency and one of the most formidable challenges to human life and dignity, as well as to the effective enjoyment of human rights, which undermines social and economic development throughout the world and affects all levels of society—national, community, family and individual.”

- 7: Number of countries with HIV prevalence rates over 20% of their total populations—all in southern Africa, with Botswana leading at 38.8% (Global Change, 2002; World Bank, 2006)
- 13: Number of HIV-infected women for every 10 HIV-infected men in Africa generally, a worse disparity in some regions (e.g., 45 women for every 10 men in Kenya and Mali) and unlikely to improve until the social status of African women is raised and gender violence and hurtful rituals (e.g., female genital cutting) that increase the likelihood of women contracting HIV are eliminated (UNAIDS, 2004; WHO, 2005)
- 80: Percentage of new HIV infections in sub-Saharan Africa incurred by women, many of whom, lacking economic security, are forced to exchange sex for survival and thus are rendered vulnerable to the disease, a cause-and-effect chain that cannot end until women are accorded the full extent of their human rights—economic, social, and cultural as well as civil and political (Interagency Coalition on AIDS and Development, 2005; WHO, 2000)
- 400–500: Percentage by which HIV/AIDS mortality among working-age Africans is expected to rise in the near future due to insufficient resour-

- es to combat the epidemic, current life expectancy having lately dropped to below age 40 despite some recent tangible progress resulting from changes in sexual culture (including increased condom use) in Uganda and elsewhere in Africa (World Bank, 2006; BBC News, 2004)
- 5,000:** Number of teachers in South Africa dying of AIDS-related illnesses annually, reflecting a severe denial of every teacher's right to health and every child's right to education, as in the case of the Central African Republic where 107 of 173 schools have been closed due to staff shortages attributable to HIV/AIDS (Cape Argus, Cape Town, 2006; General Assembly Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, 2001; AIDSmap, 2004)
- 30,000:** Maximum number of Africans receiving anti-retroviral medication in 2001—increased to 750,000 by 2005 but still far short of the need, with only 1 in 10 infected Africans receiving the medication as of mid-2005 (UN Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2006; BBC News, 2005)
- 500,000:** Number of children who died of HIV-related illnesses in 2005 (children comprising less than 5% of persons receiving anti-retroviral medication in the developing world), thus depleting the human resources of the next generation to such a degree that, for the first time ever, the UN Security Council discussed the implications of a health issue for international security (BBC News, 2005; UN Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2006; AIDSmap, 2004)
- 2,400,000:** Number of people in sub-Saharan Africa who died of HIV-related illnesses in 2005 while a further 3.2 million were newly infected with the virus during the same year, each without sufficient international intervention to protect people's fundamental right to life (World Bank, 2006)
- 12,000,000:** Minimum number of African children orphaned by AIDS in 2005 (15 million globally, 25 million forecast for 2010)—15% of them 0-4 years, 35% 5-9 years, and 50% 10-14 years old, most of them dropping out of school upon the death of their parents and thereafter, regardless of age, being lured into crime, sex work, or military service as traditional safety nets unravel (AVERT.ORG, 2006; World Bank, 2006)
- 45,000,000:** Predicted number of additional people who will be infected with HIV/AIDS by 2010 (90 million by 2020), 29 million of them avoidable with culturally appropriate prevention and education measures that so far are lacking (UN Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2006; BBC News, 2005)
- 50,000,000:** Approximate number of Africans infected by HIV/AIDS since the beginning of the epidemic in the mid-1980s, approximately 22 million of whom have died from the disease in the last 20 years (World Bank, 2006)

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