

Harika Rayala
8099 Running Fox Rd, Apt. 1D
Columbus, OH 43235
(614) 985-4189
harikarayala@yahoo.com
Worthington Kilbourne High School
Year: 11

President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush,

Today's youth are tomorrow's leaders- that is, if they are given the chance. The situation in Africa is undeniably grave. AIDS is the leading cause of death among African youth.ⁱ Malaria is the leading cause of death in African children under five.ⁱⁱ Still, the situation worsens everyday. Dedicated to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the United States is one of the biggest donors in funds for malaria, AIDS, and tuberculosis. It has consistently been a leader in U.N. operations. Yet, this is not enough.

Though these diseases affect many people worldwide, the conditions are most acute in sub-Saharan Africa. In this region, 70% of all people are infected with HIV, yet it is home to only 11% of the population.ⁱⁱⁱ Malaria kills an additional million people a year, with 90% of these deaths occurring in Africa.^{iv} To meet the Millennium Development Goals, the United States should, as a world leader, pave the way for a brighter future in Africa.

The impact of these destructive diseases on the economic sector is undeniable. Currently, AIDS alone affects almost 37 million people between the ages of fifteen and forty-seven, many of whom are in their most productive years.^v As increasingly more workers are infected with AIDS, the reduced labor force, due to absenteeism, causes decreased productivity in many businesses, deterring investments and exportation of products.^{vi} This effect is most detrimental in Africa, where most of the economy and

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many burgeoning businesses depend largely on the huge labor force. Nations are further hindered by the economic impact of malaria, which has been estimated to cost Africa \$12 billion USD every year.^{vii}

The women in sub-Saharan Africa are also severely impacted by the growing epidemics. In many cultures, the female is responsible for maintaining the household; consequently, the duty of caring for an ill relative falls on her. Although caring for the sick is a crucial and compassionate duty, it nevertheless restricts females from either pursuing education or acquiring a job. Unsurprisingly, then, the literacy rate for girls in Africa is quickly reaching its nadir.^{viii} Not only a setback for Millennium Development Goal Six, it also impedes the progress achieved towards Goal Three, which seeks to reduce the inequality between men and women by empowering women. Also, women who are victims of AIDS are unjustly branded with a scarlet letter by their local communities. Though they are not solely responsible, society has come to place the brunt of the blame on the women. Fearing rebuke, the female victims of AIDS are reluctant to pursue jobs or education, which further hinders the economy and literacy rate of many African nations. Malaria also affects women psychologically when it strikes thousands of infants and children. Due to scarce treatments and overcrowded hospitals, most of these children are placed on long waiting lists, as their mothers are helpless to do anything more than wait unrelentlessly.^{ix}

Diseases, such as HIV or malaria, also impact education. A decline in school enrollment is the most immediate effect. Less conspicuous but just as important is the

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absenteeism of teachers.^x When teachers leave work due to sickness or care for relatives, they are replaced with new teachers. If a frequent occurrence, then the learning of the students is disrupted.^{xi}

The U.S. should launch a three-pronged attack on these deadly diseases. The first aspect of this proposal is prevention of AIDS through education. The success of education in battling AIDS is best seen in the nation of Uganda. From 1991 to 2001, HIV infection rates in Uganda have sharply declined from 15% to 5%.^{xii} Even more, rates as high as 30% have drastically dropped to 10% among Ugandan pregnant women in Kampala, the capital of Uganda.^{xiii} Many attribute Uganda's success to the "ABC" approach employed by the Ugandan government in collaboration with various other religious and community organizations. The "ABC" approach outlines an HIV prevention message as follows: **A**bstain from sex until marriage, **B**e faithful to your partner, use **C**ondoms if necessary.^{xiv} Because of this widespread message, Uganda's Demographic and Health Survey of 2000-2001 found that 93% of Ugandans changed their sexual behaviors to avoid AIDS.^{xv} This result is even more impressive after considering the dearth of financial resources in Uganda, a country that spends on its entire health services only about 0.5% of what America spends on just AIDS alone.^{xvi} Uganda needs to serve as a paradigm of AIDS prevention for its neighboring countries. The U.S. should base its AIDS prevention program on the strategies used by Uganda. As Harvard research scientist Edward Green affirms, "The Ugandan model has the most to teach the rest of the world. This policy should guide the development of programs in Africa and the Caribbean funded under the President's initiative."^{xvii} Just like Uganda, the United States

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should also form partnerships with major religious and youth-based organizations to emphasize abstinence and monogamy in the developing countries. This message should be broadcast widely through speeches, classroom education, advertising, and so forth. It should form a “social vaccine against HIV: a set of cultural values that encouraged more responsible sexual attitudes and behaviors.”^{xviii} Uganda has proven that the best method to combat AIDS is a broad appeal to the people to understand the dangers of AIDS. A USAID study conducted by Dr. Rand Stoneburner, formerly with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, shows that Uganda’s steep decline of the rate of HIV “appears to have taken root from the behavior changes motivated by this communication-based, community-level response to the epidemic.”^{xix} Consequently, the U.S. should increase efforts to spread awareness of HIV and AIDS, through partnerships with local community and religious organizations, in regions of Africa with high prevalence rates.

To combat malaria and tuberculosis, the U.S. should increase its contributions to the Global Fund, in addition to encouraging other nations to also donate. The Global Fund was founded in January 2002 to help achieve Millennium Development Goal Six by combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis. Yet, since then, its progress has waned due to lack of funding. Since U.S. represents one-third of the global wealth, it is only fitting that U.S. contribute to the Global Fund one-third of the total amount raised each year. However, recent funding levels are falling short of this mark and subsequently damaging the efficacy of the Global Fund. Furthermore, regardless of its power, one nation cannot and should not attempt to combat these diseases alone. Therefore, it is in the best interests of U.S. to encourage other nations to play their part in contributing to

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the Global Fund. After all, funds are the best weapons to combat malaria and tuberculosis.

Malaria is a tragic case because it is easily preventable and curable, if the right precautions are taken. These precautions include: drugs at affordable prices, and availability of bed nets with insecticides for everyone, especially children and pregnant women.^{xx} Yet, malaria's impact on sub-Saharan Africa is devastating because of the lack of finances in most nations. By contributing more to the Global Fund, the United States and other nations can help ensure that more regions of Africa have access to these precautions.

Similarly, tuberculosis can also be prevented with more funding. The key to ending tuberculosis is vaccines. The United States already funds research on developing more effective vaccines, but it needs to contribute more to the Global Fund to improve the abject conditions in the hospitals of developing countries. In many nations, such as South Africa, "there are long waiting lists of up to 70 patients hoping to gain admission to hospitals, and crowded wards with as many as 40 people packed into one room. Some of these patients have to sleep on the floor, and many travel for days to reach the hospital."^{xxi} By gaining more fiscal assistance, the Global Fund can build bigger and more accessible hospitals. There is also an added benefit in contributing to tuberculosis efforts. Since HIV-positive patients have a greater risk of infection, they consist of most of the TB cases. Providing more vaccines to TB patients can also reduce the mortality rate of HIV patients.

Finally, America should implement peacekeeping operations among the various

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governmental officials of African nations. As long as there are power struggles and corruption, prevention of AIDS, malaria, and TB will take the backseat. Progress is attainable only if there is a unified and candid effort from the government. The U.S. should commence peace talks between conflicting sides in government. In view of carrot or stick, America should undoubtedly offer the carrot; in other words, it should offer the government officials extra incentives compelling them to negotiate and come to an agreement.

Through education, greater funds, and peacekeeping operations, the U.S. can fulfill its responsibility to help combat the widespread diseases, AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis. Winston Churchill once likened America to a “giant boiler. Once the fire is lighted under it, there is no limit to the power it can generate.”^{xxii} Let U.S. keep the torch of liberty burning by paving the way for advancement into the new century.

Sincerely,

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<<http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/about/aids/>>.

ⁱⁱ *ibid*

ⁱⁱⁱ *ibid*

^{iv} *ibid*

^v "Economic Impact of HIV/AIDS on Business." Global Business Coalition on

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<<http://www.businessfightsaids.org/live/resources/economic.php>>.

vi *ibid*

vii MMV: Past, Present, and Future. Medicines for Malaria Venture. 2007. 27 Dec. 2007
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viii Abbott, Pamela, Claire Wallace, and Melissa Tyler. An Introduction to Sociology
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ix "Spotlight on Orphans." 16 Dec. 2007. Hearth to Hearth Ministries. 28 Dec. 2007
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x The World Bank (2002), Education and HIV/AIDS: A Window of Hope

xi *ibid*

xii Kirungi, Fred. "Uganda Beating Back AIDS." Africa Recovery 15 (2001): 26. 28 Dec.
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xiii *ibid*

xiv *ibid*

xv *ibid*

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^{xvi} *ibid*

^{xvii} *ibid*

^{xviii} *ibid*

^{xix} *ibid*

^{xx} Cook, Marie. "Uganda: Malaria "Wasting Away Lives"" World Vision 20 Apr. 2007.
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^{xxi} Yale University. "Simple Strategy Could Prevent Half Of Deadly Tuberculosis Infections." ScienceDaily 19 December 2007. 3 January 2008
<<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/12/071218151737.htm>>.

^{xxii} Humes, James C. Wit and Wisdom of Winston Churchill: a Treasury of More Than 1,000 Quotations and Anecdotes. HarperCollins, 1995.

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