

# The Threat of HIV/AIDS to Democracy and Governance.

Briefing prepared for USAID<sup>1</sup>

By

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## Introduction.

Over the past 15 years the HIV epidemic has raged through much of Africa, and parts of Asia. According to the 1999 UNAIDS report globally, there were 5.6 million new infections and 2.6 million deaths in 1999, there are an estimated 33.6 million people living with HIV/AIDS, the majority in the developing world. In Africa UNAIDS and WHO estimates that 12.2 million women and 10.1 million men aged 15-49 are infected.

The World Bank notes:

At the **national** level, the 21 countries with the highest HIV prevalence are all in Africa. In Zimbabwe and Botswana, one in four adults is infected. In at least ten other African countries, prevalence rates exceed ten percent.

At the **individual** level, the arithmetic of risk is horrific. A child born in Zambia or Zimbabwe tonight is more likely than not to die of AIDS. In many other African countries, the lifetime risk of dying of AIDS is greater than one in three.

... AIDS already accounts for 9% of adult deaths from infectious disease in the developing world. By 2020, that share will quadruple to more than 37%. The global death toll will soon surpass the worst epidemics of recorded history. And unlike those prior plagues, AIDS could well remain with us for decades to come. ... From a public health standpoint, AIDS has added a grave new challenge to what was already an arduous agenda.”<sup>3</sup>

The HIV epidemic has begun to turn into an AIDS epidemic, with dire consequences for development. Indeed AIDS is, in effect turning back the development clock in many countries. The most obvious impact is through its effect on life expectancy. There are two main sources for data of the effect of AIDS on life expectancy.

**Table 1. The Consequences of HIV/AIDS for Life Expectancy<sup>4</sup>, the HDI and Global Ranking: Evidence from Selected African Countries.**

	1996		1997		1998		1999	
	HDI (rank)	Life Exp.						
Botswana	0.741 (71)	65.2	0.673 (97)	52.3	0.678 (97)	51.7	0.609 (122)	47.4
South Africa	0.649 (100)	63.2	0.716 (90)	63.7	0.717 (89)	64.1	0.695 (101)	54.7
Zimbabwe	0.534 (124)	53.4	0.513 (129)	49	0.507 (130)	48.9	0.560 (130)	44.1
Kenya	0.473 (128)	55.5	0.463 (134)	53.6	0.463 (137)	53.8	0.519 (136)	52
Zambia	0.411 (136)	48.6	0.369 (143)	42.6	0.378 (146)	42.7	0.431 (151)	40.1
Uganda	0.326 (155)	44.7	0.328 (159)	40.2	0.34 (160)	40.5	0.404 (158)	39.6

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<sup>3</sup> A Memo issued on June 2, 1999 to World Bank staff and supporters announcing the new AIDS in Africa initiative: "A wildfire is raging across Africa".

<sup>4</sup> The 1996 report has 1993 data, 1997 Report 1994 data, the 1998 Report 1995 data but the 1999 has 1997 data.

The US Bureau of the Census has produced estimates of the effect on life expectancy in 1998 and 2010. These are based on modelled data and project a particularly bleak future.<sup>5</sup> In the 1997 HDR the UNDP began considering HIV/AIDS as an issue and incorporating it into their statistics (and this is still not done for all countries). The impact of AIDS on life expectancy, and consequently in terms of the HDI and ranking of countries is considerable, as is shown in Table 1 for selected African countries. These data for an impact on life expectancy reflect an AIDS epidemic that is still in the early stages, HIV is still spreading and AIDS cases follow on some years later. Furthermore the life expectancy figures are at least two years prior to the date of the report.

It might be argued that the absence of life means all other indicators are irrelevant. However a review of the OECD goals indicates that a number of these targets are also becoming unattainable in the light of the epidemic.

### **Democracy, Governance and HIV/AIDS**

“Expanding the global community of democracies is a key objective of U.S. foreign policy. As the primary channel for U.S. foreign assistance in the developing world, USAID has taken a leading role in promoting and consolidating democracy worldwide. Expanding democracy improves individual opportunity for prosperity and improved well-being, thus contributing to the more traditional goals of the Agency.”

Democracy and governance is one of the underpinning themes of US Foreign Policy and Foreign Assistance. It is recognised to be a *necessary, but not sufficient*, condition for economic development and global peace and prosperity. The relationship between HIV/AIDS and democracy and governance is a two way one. AIDS has the potential to undermine achievement of DG objectives and hence the broader US policies; but DG can contribute to addressing the epidemic, in terms of both prevention and impact.

### **The Impact of AIDS on DG.**

AIDS causes increased morbidity and mortality among prime age adults and young children. The consequences of this are:

- Loss of people in their 30's and 40's. These are people who currently keep the wheels of commerce and the state turning, and will provide the next generation of leaders.
- The depletion of national *human capital*. The people who die will have had resources invested in them – they will have completed their education and training and be gaining experience. Their death means this investment is lost.
- Increased orphaning. There are two sources of orphans – the children born to parents before HIV infection enters the family and secondly those children born to infected mothers. A child born to an infected mother has about a 30% chance of being infected and this can be reduced with appropriate interventions, however the child has a close to 100% chance of being orphaned. Orphans represent a long term threat to stability and development unless there are imaginative efforts to address the problem.
- Potential instability as middle ranking army officers, police and other security forces face increased illness and death.
- Social instability if there is not clear political leadership. Evidence suggests that in societies facing economic crisis and lack of clear political leadership the presence of AIDS with its associated stigma may cause instability. The citizens are aware of the increase in illness and death, the stigma associated with it; and the lack of leadership leads to blame and *anomie* in the society.

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<sup>5</sup> US Bureau of the Census, Report WP/98, World Population Profile: 1998, US Government Printing Office, Washington DC, 1999

- Human rights may be infringed, and this response to the epidemic may even be entrenched through the legal system, through actions such as making AIDS notifiable.
- Government inefficiency may result. The reason is that government tends to have generous conditions of employment and be less flexible. Thus people who fall ill will have extended periods of sick leave during which their posts will not be filled and their work not done.
- Economic stagnation may result with the cost of production going up and productivity declining.

The effect of AIDS on countries already facing crisis is to make a bad situation worse. The addition of this fatal illness to the panoply of other stresses will be adverse, complex and long term.

### The Effect of DG on HIV/AIDS

The bio-medical view of the spread of HIV looks at the behaviour patterns in society, use of condoms and factors such as the virus sub-type, existence of other STDs as determinants of the speed and extent of the spread of HIV. In reality the causes are far more complex. One hypothesis<sup>6</sup> suggest that crucial to understanding societies' susceptibility and vulnerability to HIV and AIDS are just two concepts:

- the degree of social cohesion in society and
- the overall level of wealth

Social cohesion needs further explanation. It may derive from civil society, that part of society which occupies the space between the individual and the state and the degree to which there is a perceived and acted-upon community of interest in a group or nation. It includes voluntary organisations, NGOs, churches, parent-teacher associations, indeed any grouping of people outside the household and workplace. Social cohesion may also stem from control through an authoritarian political or cultural system or from national beliefs and ideologies, especially organised religion. The unit of analysis may be a whole society but also may be a household or sub-community.

Wealth and income are relatively unproblematic concepts. Of considerable importance is recent work on health and inequality which has reminded us of the relationship between general health, socio-economic inequality and the degree of social support available in a society. There is however no need to introduce inequality as an additional variable as societies with low social cohesion and high wealth appear to have high Gini coefficients indicating income inequality.

The significance of this for DG is simple. Societies with a high development of civil society and good governance are less likely to experience an HIV epidemic, and more able to respond to the epidemic and control the spread of HIV.

Developed democratic systems and civil society not only provide a measure of defence against HIV spread but also assist social response and mitigate the impact

There are a number of immediate responses that are possible and important:

- Political leadership at all levels must be encouraged to put HIV/AIDS on their agendas, bringing it into all their activities. The United States can encourage this through its

<sup>6</sup> This argument has been developed by Tony Barnett and Alan Whiteside and the article expounding the ideas was published in the European Journal of Development Research in December 1999.

contacts with the leadership. Meetings between Ambassadors, Heads of Mission and local leadership could routinely include an HIV/AIDS status report and update.

- The US has an important role to play in advocacy using existing resources such as the US Bureau of the Census, the Policy Project and University of Natal AIDS Briefs and Toolkits. The value of this expertise and 'neutral' message is considerable.
- Building civil society is an agency goal – incorporating HIV/AIDS into this will have many unexpected benefits.
- Legal issues and women's rights, if addressed properly will assist in responding to the epidemic.

### Democracy and Governance: The Core to Response

Work by Robert Putnam<sup>7</sup> has shown the links between civil society, democracy and accountable government and economic growth. More recently the links between health, equality and economic development have been the subject of research. It is becoming clear that underlying social and economic development are issues of democracy and governance. AIDS finds the cracks in society and erodes them further.

Responding to AIDS is not an optional extra for DG activities, it is core to success of the DG strategic objective. Equally DG has a crucial role to play in both prevention and impact mitigation. What is needed is 'mainstreaming' and 'out-of-the-box' thinking.

#### A framework for USAID Goal 2 – Democracy and Good Governance Strengthened.

Objective	Impact of HIV/AIDS on this objective	Impact of this objective on HIV/AIDS
1. rule of law and respect for human rights of women as well as men strengthened	Stigma reduces respect and especially affects women. Legislation may be reactive and infringe human rights Loss of police and legal staff hampers provision rule of law.	Fair legal system and lack of stigma brings openness that assists prevention Women's rights crucial to power and sexual relationships
2. credible and competitive political processes encouraged	AIDS becomes an election issue leading to blame. Electoral officer's morbidity & mortality decreases efficiency. Death of politicians leads to frequent by-elections reducing political credibility.	AIDS becomes an election issue. Leadership around AIDS. More female representation.
3. development of a politically active civil society promoted	AIDS makes civil society development difficult Reduces female participation. Diverts resources	Strong civil society linked with low prevalence, building of civil society linked with control of HIV and impact mitigation. Women's empowerment.
4. transparent and accountable government institutions encouraged	Breakdown of state. Loss of government staff causes growing inefficiency Growing inexperience in uniformed forces. Stigma and blame.	Improved information flows. Leadership.

<sup>7</sup> Robert D Putnam, Making Democracy Work.: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993.