

**Forum:** World Health Organisation

**Issue:** Delivering treatment for babies living with HIV in LDCs

**Officer:** Miguel Velázquez Gutiérrez

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## Introduction

Ever since the 1960s, AIDS and HIV have been spreading through Africa, and reaching the United States and Europe in the 1970s, before becoming a global pandemic in the 1980s. Nowadays, the regions that are most affected by the disease are those located in the Southern regions of Africa, including South Africa, Lesotho and Eswatini, showing that 25.9% of the total population is affected by the disease. In most African countries, the rates have gone down since the 2000s, showing great improvement in medical treatment in people aged 14-49 in countries like Botswana or Zimbabwe, who lowered the rate of citizens with AIDS by a massive 50%. In 2018, there were an estimated 14.8 million babies with HIV in Africa, and five countries accounted for 50%, being South Africa, Uganda, Mozambique, Tanzania and Nigeria.

Whilst many countries have done the most research possible to tackle this issue, it still is not enough, since the only and main provider of information on HIV specifically in babies is UNICEF. This fact alone proves how little have countries explored the vast and threatening reality of HIV in younger populations, which obtain the virus by either lactation in their early years or sexual reproduction in their teenage years.

Liveal Biofarma is the main provider of ART (Retrovir) in the world, drug most commonly known to tackle HIV worldwide, and one of the only that have been tested successful on children, therefore its collaboration, as well as the cooperation of its origin country in the process, and the cooperation of countries with the ability to produce Retrovir is crucial for an eventual solution.

## Definition of Key Terms

### HIV

HIV is the acronym for Human Immunodeficiency Virus, it is a precursor of AIDS. HIV is a virus that develops throughout 5-10 years until it leads to the development of AIDS. It debilitates and infects vital cells in the human body to do so.

### AIDS

AIDS is the acronym for Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome. It is a disease that evolves towards the total failure of the immune system, leading to the spur of incredibly harmful diseases and serious cases of cancer.

### Retrovir

Retrovir is the trade name for the common antiviral drug used in the treatment of HIV, both in adults and kids affected by the disease. The drug is derived from zidovudine and is produced in few MDCs.

### SAA

The SAA stands for Society for AIDS in Africa, and is an association led by African participants that promotes and institutes policies for the further research against both HIV and AIDS. It collaborates with other associations worldwide in the fight against AIDS, but is the most relevant to the case tackled in this committee.

## Background Information

### Historical Context

HIV has been established to be a virus that originated from the multiple cross-relationships between species from the simian family. Its expansion to humans was insignificant, with 1 or 2 cases appearing every year before the 1960s. It was that year when the first mass spread of HIV occurred, originating in Cameroon, with the infection of the HIV-1 lentivirus in humans. The origin of said infection is nowadays a mere speculation, ranging from sexual relationships with a simian species to the consumption of these apes due to the lack of resources given by the treaty done with First World countries when it came to primary production. From there, the virus spread like wildfire, reaching Europe and the United States in the 1970s. Despite the actual first case of HIV occurring in Congo in 1959, it was not the lentivirus that ended up spreading outside Africa. The first death outside Africa due to HIV would occur in 1969, as a teenager in St Louis by the name of Robert Rayford would die due to “unknown causes” that would be proven 18 years later to be HIV related.

The general pandemic of AIDS would expand throughout the world in the 1980s, being targeted as a “homosexual virus”, due to its common appearance in LGBT people back in the day, despite being proven in 1983 the appearance of the virus in heterosexual males in Africa. The mystery behind the disease led to misinformation and misunderstanding of how it worked, until it was determined by the WHO that HIV was transmitted by “sexual fluids, blood or breast milk”. That exact statement led to the first global instance of HIV in babies.

The first cases of HIV in babies outside of Africa were located in New Haven, in which Shawn Lawler was born with HIV, due to his mother also carrying the disease. Shawn lived 3 ½ years before passing away due to the disease. The story was not published until CBS did a report on the case, talking both about the disease on Ms Lawler and her son. It was proven how Shawn suffered from opportunistic infection and metastatic

lymphoma during his life. It was also discussed if the cases of HIV had to be quarantined in order to prevent its spreading, as well as it was discussed if maybe limiting the sexual relationships of HIV-affected people could decrease the rapid increase of HIV cases.

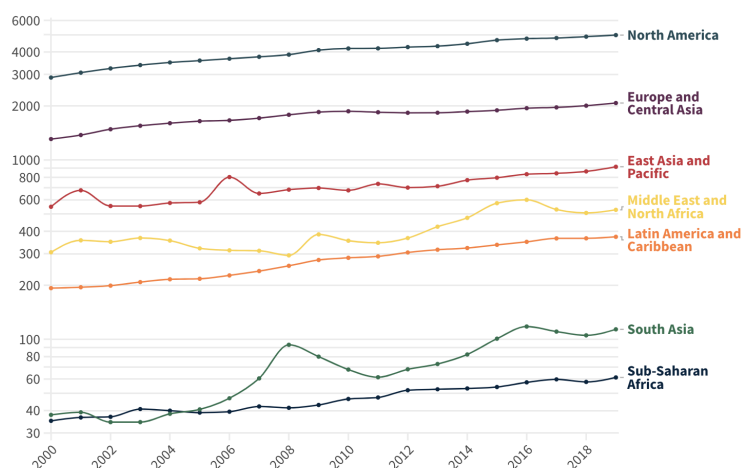
Bear in mind that Retrovir was not fully developed until March 1987, so the first treatment for the disease was not even existing in the time being.

## Current Situation

To this day, many studies have been done in the field of HIV in babies, but most of them tend to be estimates of how it will affect society by 2030. According to UNICEF, around 80 adolescents will die from AIDS every day by 2030, as a consequence of HIV in their earlier stages of life. The current estimated number of children with HIV is 2.5 million (3.4 upper-1.9 lower). The number of deaths related to HIV rises to 100.000 children, and this is the fact that actually frightens the United Nations to this day. The mortality rate in children with HIV is more than likely to increase in the following years, and with the recent sanitary crisis and global economic recession, there is no such determined action that would be generally plausible.

Also, as an agravant to this case, 13.9 million children had lost one or both their parents due to HIV. This is relevant data when it comes to the upbringing and maintenance of a child with HIV, which in LDCs such as Zimbabwe or Mozambique, can be incredibly complicated due to the lack of medical care and paediatric care.

When it comes to medical expenses in the LDCs, ergo the Sub-Saharan nations, the recent report in 2023 done by the WHO exposes that the expense is still way too low for the nations that need medical assistance



the most. The following graph shows this issue

## Foreign Reactions

Countries worldwide, despite having to express deep concern, have not addressed the issue enough. Whilst the European Union and the European Convention on Human Rights both acknowledge the need for the right to health in LDCs, the most recent measures and statements involve mentioning how this health issue could lead to a potentially dangerous outburst of migratory control in European countries. Nowadays, the most recent countries that have shown support and evolution against the spread of HIV, both in adults and babies, are Belarus and the United States, which, with USAID (United States Agency for International Development), have achieved epidemic control of HIV in countries like Burundi and Burkina Faso. Additionally, the Global Fund approved a measure to devote 9.2 billion US dollars to the investigation and treatment of HIV, malaria and tuberculosis, all deeply related to AIDS in LDCs, and that could help towards the decrease of babies with HIV.

Also, Henrietta Fore, UNICEF Executive Director, exposed on World AIDS day that Our great success in preventing HIV transmission from mothers to babies demonstrates that we can make progress, and added that *We will continue working with governments and other partners to scale-up treatment and prevention efforts among older children in communities worldwide — with a particular emphasis on areas like sub-Saharan Africa, where the epidemic remains stubbornly persistent, and in regions like Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean, where epidemics are relatively small but where countries have made little progress in reducing the number of new infections*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Message from UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore on World AIDS Day.* (n.d.). <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/message-unicef-executive-director-henrietta-fore-world-aids-day>

## Countries and Organisations Involved

### South Africa

South Africa is the country with the most cases of HIV in all of Africa, the continent with the most critical affectation towards said disease. As both a country with huge say in UN measures and a key representative of Africa, it is substantial for South Africa to provide data about HIV, especially in babies. Up to 37% of babies in South Africa are born with HIV, leading to a high mortality rate.

When it comes to medical supplies, South Africa is the country with the biggest need of paediatric and palliative care in Africa, due to the high amount of HIV cases, however, it is the second country with most medical resources in the continent, just behind Morocco, that with its great investments in the Middle East, plus its trading habits with Mediterranean countries, have managed to have an extensive medical spectrum, being the forefront of African nations in the medical field. Therefore, South Africa is yet to become stable when it comes to dealing with the HIV epidemic, even more specifically in babies. Currently, the South African government deals Retrovir to the citizens for “free” since 2004, being 50% of that Retrovir dealt from India, and the other 50% produced in South Africa, being this one less effective.

### India

India, despite not being one of the LDCs involved in the epidemic of HIV in babies, is the country that deals the most Retrovir to countries in Africa in the entire world.

Companies such as Aurobindo Pharma Limited, Cipla, or Hetero deal in Zivudidine, or most commonly known ARVs worldwide, and are the pioneers in producing said drug. They deal the drug to MDCs such as the United States but have also proven to deal with countries like Namibia, Zimbabwe or even the aforementioned South Africa.

## **UNICEF**

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund is key to evaluating this issue, since it is the UN organ that has collaborated the most to tackle HIV epidemics in children in LDCs. According to UNICEF, in 2020 one kid got infected from AIDS every 2 minutes. UNICEF provides the information necessary to find solutions and evaluate the problem in a clear and concise manner. UNICEF has set themselves three different objectives, being those to avoid mother-to-child transmission, increasing the medical attention and paediatric care in Sub-Saharan nations and reducing the new HIV infections in teenagers.

## **AIDS-Sweden**

The Swedish UN-related association against AIDS is one of the main contributors to UNICEF's cause of eliminating HIV by 2030 in Sub-Saharan nations. Sweden contributes to the cause both by governmental approval and by the fact that the association is managed by UNFPA (United Nations Fund for Popular Activities).



## Timeline of Events

<b>May 1959</b>	First known case of AIDS occurs in Congo, in which a Bantu man died.
<b>1964</b>	Jerome Horwitz synthesises the first ARV, even though it was intended originally as an anti-cancer drug
<b>1969</b>	Robert Rayford dies, being that the first death of an underage person outside of Africa
<b>October 31, 1980</b>	Gaëtan Dugas would be deemed (incorrectly) as Patient Zero of AIDS in the United States
<b>May 18, 1981</b>	Lawrence Mass becomes the first journalist to write about the HIV pandemic.
<b>January 1982</b>	The Gay Men's Health Crisis is founded by Larry Kramer, due to the rising cases of sarcoma related to HIV in the homosexual community
<b>1986</b>	The term HIV is proposed as the name for the retrovirus that caused AIDS. The name was assigned by Luc Montagnier, who named it LAV ( <i>lymphadenopathy associated virus</i> )
<b>October 22, 1986</b>	The first official US report on AIDS is done by C. Everett Koop, ordered by Ronald Reagan, president of the United States.
<b>1987</b>	Zidovudine, the first antiretroviral drug, becomes available
<b>December 1, 1988</b>	The first World AIDS day is celebrated
<b>1995</b>	Saquinavir, the first inhibitor drug for AIDS that permitted Highly active antiretroviral therapy, was released to the public. This plummeted down the death rates for AIDS, but could not be used in children
<b>1996</b>	Brazilian law No 9313 allowed the provision of HIV medication to all population that was HIV positive

- 2000** WHO states how 20% of HIV infections occur through blood transfusions, without knowing what illnesses that blood contained.
- 2007** The first case of cure in HIV is found in San Francisco, as a man with HIV is cured through a bone marrow transplant in Germany.
- 2023** The “Dusseldorf” patient was considered to be the fifth and last patient (for now) to be cured from HIV.

## Relevant UN Treaties and Resolutions

### 1989 International Consultation on AIDS

The International Guidelines on HIV/AIDS was firstly consulted from 23-25 September 1996 in Geneva, and was later consulted in July 2002 in Geneva, but the first consultation on the matter, being that a written document on the knowledge we had about HIV/AIDS was done in Geneva in 1989. The document, now updated to the year 2006, consolidates the guidelines adopted in the 1996 consultation, assists all nations in creating a positive, rights-based response to HIV that is effective in reducing the frequency of infection, as well as respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms.

*As quoted in said documented guidelines, the purpose of these Guidelines is to assist States in translating international human rights norms into practical observance in the context of HIV. To this end, the Guidelines consist of three parts: first, Guidelines for State action comprising action-oriented measures to be employed by Governments in the areas of law, administrative policy and practice that will protect human rights and achieve HIV-related public health goals; second, recommendations for dissemination and implementation of the Guidelines; and third, international human rights obligations and HIV, which describes the human rights principles underlying a positive response to HIV<sup>2</sup>.*

### Resolution 47/1 E/2003/27

The following resolution, passed in 2003 by the Commission on the Status of Women, has been one of the only to actually tackle the issue of HIV in children, since it addresses how nurturing mothers with HIV in LDCs should act and be taken care of in their respective situation. The following resolution states many points that are valuable to the

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<sup>2</sup> *Published jointly by the office of the United nations high commissioner for human rights and the joint united nations programme on HIV/AIDS.* (n.d.). Ohchr.org. Retrieved January 15, 2024, from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/HIV/ConsolidatedGuidelinesHIV.pdf>

study of HIV in Sub-Saharan countries. It urges countries to implement the commitments approved in the General Assembly resolution S-26/2, that addresses the Declaration of Commitment to HIV/AIDS. However, the resolution does not go deep enough into the care taken towards children with HIV, since it mostly specifies which status position women should have in this issue in order to achieve gender equality in terms of achieving a fair solution. The most we can get out of this resolution is clause 10, that urges governments to promote programs in order to raise funds for children with HIV/AIDS.

## Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

### UNAIDS, UNICEF and WHO union

On the 2nd of August of 2022, all of the aforementioned UN-related organs joined forces in order to tackle once and for all the problem of HIV in babies and children all over Africa. The data released by UNAIDS was part of the reason: almost 50% of all the children living with HIV in Africa are not attended clinically, and are therefore prone to a death in the following 2 to 3 years. The Global Alliance for ending AIDS has set its objective towards 2030 and hopes for society to do civil movements in order to do so. The Global Alliance is located in Montreal, Canada, therefore Canada will be an important country when it comes to debating on solutions against HIV. The Global Alliance has set four pillars of action to counteract the disease on children, being those the following:

- Closing the treatment gap for pregnant and breastfeeding adolescent girls and women living with HIV
- Preventing and detecting new HIV infections
- Accessible testing, optimised treatment and comprehensive care for children
- Addressing rights, gender equality, and other circumstances that may be prone to changing in said process of eradicating HIV.

### Live Aid 1985

Probably the most iconic and popular action taken in response to the HIV epidemic. Live Aid was a concert that took place in the Wembley Stadium in London, England, and in the John F. Kennedy Stadium in Philadelphia, US, on the 13th of July 1985. The concert was organised by Bob Geldof, with the intention of raising money to help Ethiopia and Somalia in their efforts of controlling HIV in their country. Between both concerts, there were a total of 172.000 assistants, all willing to donate to the cause and listening to the great show that was prepared. Between the most famous bands and solo acts, we can find The Who in Philadelphia, and the mythical performance by Queen, which was later

made more significant, after Freddie Mercury's death in 1991 due to AIDS-related difficulties. It was also in 1985 where, in the Philadelphia concert, we would hear for the first time one of the hymns towards peace that the UN got to approve, "We Are The World".

Nowadays, Live Aid concerts still exist, yet their cause is no longer focused on AIDS, but rather general peace. For example, Live Aid 2022 was focused on helping Ukraine overcome the crisis, a consequence of the conflict with Russia.

## Possible Solutions

To this day, the solution to this specific question has been torn apart. Between the constant economic recession that is affecting all the world, and the fragility of diplomatic relationships, it's hard to find a reasonable solution without some agreements and diplomatic reconciliation first. The main solutions would range from these:

- 1) Create a fund for MDCs that produce Retrovir, so that these MDCs can cooperate in delivering Zidovudine to Sub-Saharan LDCs. The fund could benefit the countries in most need as a priority, and then later on benefit the other nations in Africa that do not show the same difficulty as the rest of the Sub-Saharan nations.
- 2) Elaborate individual pacts that obligate certain countries to deal in Retrovir in relation to how much Retrovir they can produce. For example, a country that can produce massive amounts of Retrovir, like India or the United States, could deal with more than three countries in need, whereas other countries that produce less Retrovir or other ARVs, such as Israel, can deal with just one country. Some ideas for pacts could be the following:
  - Israel → South Africa
  - India → Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe
  - United States → Lesotho, Madagascar, Swaziland, Botswana
  - Germany → Namibia

But most importantly, all of the debate must be taken from the perspective of both the LDC, as well as the mother behind these children with HIV. It is essential for all of the human rights imposed by the UN to be thoroughly respected, since health is a sensible manner that must be dealt with specially. Therefore, from the chair team we recommend a sensible character when proposing solutions, and a more communal point of view, as well as avoiding any exterior politics in solution-making. Despite being a good catalyst for debate, any political point of view outside of health must not be expressed in resolutions, but rather debate only. As a closing point, all delegates must

come very prepared and well-informed in order to make this debating experience as fruitful as possible. Good luck delegates.



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