

You can make a difference

Help break the silence. Add your voice to ours. Take action now.

WRITE, e-mail or fax the Prime Minister and demand that Canada increase its commitment to the Global AIDS Fund.

VISIT this website www.maketradeair.com and e-mail Pascal Lamy, Trade Commissioner for the European Commission, and Robert Zoellick, Chief US Trade Representative, and ask them to support amendments to global patent rules which allow African countries to access affordable generic AIDS drugs.

PASS motions at your union, church or community association meetings to financially support the Stephen Lewis Foundation and other organizations helping people in Africa.

JOIN forces with other progressive organizations in your community and form an AIDS in Africa Solidarity Committee.

DISTRIBUTE this pamphlet to your friends, co-workers, relatives and neighbours.

LEARN MORE and stay up-to-date on this issue by visiting www.nupge.ca



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AND GENERAL EMPLOYEES**

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The National Union of Public and General Employees is an affiliate of the Canadian Labour Congress and a member of the Public Services International



we're all affected AIDS IN AFRICA



June 12, 2003

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Chrétien:

I urge you to promptly escalate the Canadian government's commitment to combating the intensifying pandemic of HIV/AIDS in Africa.

HIV/AIDS in Africa has caused unprecedented destruction. It is not just a health crisis. It's also an economic and development crisis. It has killed millions of adults in the prime of their working and parenting lives. It has decimated workforces and orphaned millions of children. It sickens and kills farmers, curtailing the food supply, providing fertile ground for further infections.

This agony in Africa is not inevitable. It is preventable. Canada can and must do more.

This is not only an African affair. We are all affected. We live in an increasingly interdependent world. Rich and poor, strong and weak are linked in a common destiny which decrees that one nation shall not enjoy lasting prosperity and stability unless others do too.

It's time for Canada and the rest of the world to demonstrate that we understand, and do not take for granted this fundamental principle of mutual dependence. With Canada leading the way, a concerted effort by an engaged international community could vastly ease the suffering of millions of Africans and help turn fear into hope.

Canada can lead the way forward by taking five essential steps: (1) increase our pitifully small annual contribution to the Global AIDS Fund from an average of \$37.5 million to a respectable \$87.5 million, as suggested by the U.N.; (2) demand changes to global patent rules to cut the cost of AIDS drugs and support efforts in Africa to buy generic AIDS drugs; (3) promote the U.N. International Labour Organization Code of Practice for HIV/AIDS; (4) assist African countries in building stable public health care infrastructure; (5) rouse the international community to contribute more resources to the search for a vaccine.

Time is running out. The challenge is great. There are opportunities for greater impact. Canada must not fail Africa when it most needs us. Please take action now.

Sincerely,

James Clancy
National President

AIDS in Africa

A catalyst for social justice.



Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS, have been called a “catalyst for social justice.” Not that there is anything just or fair about the disease; but HIV/AIDS has disproportionately occurred in marginalized communities

- in particular among the poor. The struggle to fight this disease requires building an international movement for justice.

A Clear Picture of HIV/AIDS in Africa

A generation is dying.

The region hit hardest by the pandemic is Africa:

- 29 million people living with HIV/AIDS;
- more than 3.5 million contracted the disease in 2002;
- 2.4 million people died of AIDS related illnesses in 2001; and
- 10 million young (15-24 years old) and 3 million children.

Only a tiny fraction of infected Africans have access to medications to combat the disease and associated infections. Some African countries are experiencing infection rates in excess of 30% - once thought not possible. There is a crisis of enormous magnitude taking place in Africa. Experts expect that the death rate from AIDS will continue to climb for the next decade if concrete action is not taken immediately.

Farmers Die – Food Production Drops – Infections Skyrocket

Think about it.

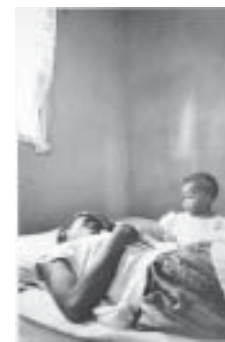
As the number of sick and dying increases the number of farmers decreases. In addition, Africa is in the midst of a drought. As a result, food production has dramatically declined. Many call the current situation in Africa an AIDS Famine. People living with HIV/AIDS need increased food and nutrition to stay healthy. As the illness progresses, food production declines, thereby advancing the onslaught of the disease.

The root of this crisis is not merely a particular deadly virus or unfortunate weather conditions. The developed world set the conditions for the current crisis and has proceeded to ignore the consequences. Decades of structural adjustment programs and trade liberalization have forced African countries to dismantle, privatize or downsize their public sector. As a new virulent disease spread, health systems were woefully inadequate to face the challenge. At the same time, government programs to ensure food access diminished.

As food production declined in Africa, some countries in the developed world tried to exploit the crisis to further their international trade agenda. In particular, conditions have been attached to financial aid, such as importing and growing genetically modified foods. Africans have made it clear that they worry about the health effects of these products and their possible environmental damage. They also worry that the use of GM foods and seeds will increase their dependence on multinational corporations. With most European countries placing a moratorium on GM foods, some of which are the largest agricultural trading partners of Africa, they are caught in a double-bind.

No Money – No Drugs

Big Pharma puts profits before people.



African countries can't afford to combat AIDS at a cost of \$15,000 U.S. per person per year. Big drug companies in the past refused to provide drugs at cost or for free. Now, after international outcry, companies have started to provide assistance. A trade deal struck under the WTO addresses

many of these concerns. It also introduces many difficult hoops and hurdles.

Generic AIDS drugs provide the most affordable ways to treat the majority of infected Africans for about \$350 per person per year. Canada has started making legislative changes to allow the export of these generic medications. After the initial rush of optimism, activists are in “wait and see” mode as government stalls on implementation. A number of organizations have started to provide generic AIDS drugs to African countries. There is much more that needs to be done!

War, Hunger and Disease - Old Friends

Developed countries fuel the crisis.

Wars throughout Africa have fuelled the AIDS crisis. Farmers and agricultural workers are dying in these conflicts thus contributing to the problem of declining food production. Soldiers infected with HIV/AIDS are spreading the disease through rape and prostitution. Many of these wars have been fueled by the developed world's hard-headed pursuit of control over Africa's natural resources.

A Call for Action

We can turn fear into hope.

HIV/AIDS is a global disease that requires a global response. Only a global movement for social justice can effectively confront the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa. Unions must join with grassroots activists and push for real and meaningful change. A concerted effort by an engaged international community could vastly ease the suffering of millions of Africans and help turn fear into hope. Canada can lead the way forward by taking five essential steps: (1) increase our pitifully small annual contribution to the Global AIDS Fund from an average of \$37.5 million to a respectable \$87.5 million, as suggested by the U.N.; (2) demand changes to global patent rules to cut the cost of AIDS drugs and support efforts in Africa to buy generic AIDS drugs; (3) promote the U.N. International Labour Organization Code of Practice for HIV/AIDS; (4) assist African countries in building stable public health care infrastructure; (5) rouse the international community to contribute more resources to the search for a vaccine.

The Stephen Lewis Foundation

Easing the pain of HIV/AIDS in Africa



As the U.N. Secretary General's Special Envoy on HIV/AIDS in Africa, Stephen Lewis has been a passionate advocate for Africa. As well, the work of the Stephen Lewis Foundation is making a difference at easing the pain for infected women and

orphaned children in Africa. We encourage you to support this foundation in whatever way possible. For more information about the Stephen Lewis Foundation please visit this website:

<http://www.stephenlewisfoundation.org>