

AIDS and its current impact on the economical situation in Africa

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Introduction

HIV (*Human immunodeficiency virus*) is a retroviral infection that is epidemic worldwide and causes Acute-Immuno-Deficiency-Syndrom (AIDS). The virus is transmitted through sexual contacts, mother-to-child-transmission and blood products. So, main risk factors are multiple sexual partners, additional genital infections and intravenous drug abuse.

AIDS is a global medical and socio-economic issue especially for low and middle income countries. For example highest prevalence of HIV is in sub-Saharan Africa with 20 million people (68% of global infections) living with HIV.

The global HIV-report (2011, WHO) shows that 34 million people are living with AIDS worldwide at the moment and the annually rate of new infections is estimated around 2.7 million. The incidence has stabilized in the past decade and number of people receiving antiretroviral therapy has been increasing up to 6.5 million people. People dying of AIDS-related causes have been decreasing too, 50% of infected pregnant women have access to medical treatment. Overall a positive development can be registered, but there are still many problems that need to be solved.

Economical aspects of AIDS

It's obvious that a high prevalence of HIV causes immense costs for a country. On the one side AIDS leads to death and loss of working power and on the other side provokes additional costs for the families and the medical system. Numerous publications proved that a high HIV prevalence slows down economical growth severely.

For example South Africa is the country with the highest AIDS prevalence in the world, the UN estimates that the household income per capita will decrease 8% and even 13% for the poorest quarter in the next ten years. The disease causes financial problems in the base of the society. Families have to spend their earnings for a sick family member and for their funeral. In sub-Saharan Africa agriculture is the main economical sector. The loss of working-power directly jeopardizes the food supply.

Due to AIDS related deaths skilled professionals and workers get lost. High AIDS prevalence also discourages foreign investors. This harms productivity and willingness of saving and investing. A lot of companies recognized the importance and effectiveness of good prevention and started to arrange their own measures.

Prevention

Prevention should be based on exact data of epidemiologic, so the most efficient setting can be designed. Better awareness of the disease and its transmission can be reached by educational programmes.

Biomedical Measures (*Due to Global AIDS Report, WHO*)

- Male circumcision
- Oral and topical antiretroviral prophylaxis
- Antiretroviral therapy for infected people to lower viral load
- Quality management of blood donations
- Knowledge of HIV status

Social Changes (*Due to Global AIDS Report, WHO*)

- Change of sexual behaviours (use of condoms)
- Education and information, awareness of the disease
- Access to medical care

Several sources have been used in order to produce this report.