**Forum:** General Assembly 3

**Issue:** Addressing the epidemics of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria across Africa

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# Introduction

The continent of Africa has the potential to thrive as a whole except the continuous emergence in infectious diseases threatens the health of millions of people across the continent. The issue of epidemics has continued to plague a multitude of nations such as Nigeria, South Africa, Swaziland, Lesotho, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Tuberculosis is a bacterial disease that primarily targets the lungs. According to the World Health Organization, in 2016, the number of people who are HIV negative and have died of tuberculosis in Africa totals approximately 417,000. Furthermore, according to the WHO, the number of people in Africa who are HIV positive and have died of tuberculosis in 2016 is approximately 374,000.

HIV which develops into AIDS impairs the body’s ability to fight disease and infection by attacking the body’s immune system. According to the HIV.gov Organization, in 2015, around 25.6 million people were living with HIV in the region of sub-Saharan Africa. Additionally, “66% of new HIV infections in 2015 occurred in sub-Saharan Africa” (HIV.gov).

Malaria is a disease that is caused by a variety of plasmodium parasites and is transmitted through infected mosquitos. According to the United Nations Children’s Fund, “malaria kills one child every 30 seconds, (and) about 3000 children every day” (WHO). Furthermore, according to UNICEF, over a million people a year die of malaria and of those one million, 90 percent occur in the sub-Saharan region of Africa.

These epidemics trap communities and run them into poverty because of the price and scarcity of treatment in areas with minimal access to health care.

# Definition of Key terms

**Epidemic**

A widespread rapid occurrence of an infectious disease, particularly in a community or region. HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria are just a few of the many epidemics present throughout the continent of Africa.

**Endemic:**

A disease found amongst certain people or in a specific area. Unlike an epidemic, an endemic is concentrated in a certain area.

**HIV:**

Human immunodeficiency virus, more commonly known as HIV, is a virus that targets the body’s immune system which is the body’s natural defense against any form of illness. HIV cannot be cured but there is currently an effective antiretroviral treatment that dramatically reduces the virus’ progress and impact on the body. HIV is transferred through the blood and is most commonly transmitted through sexual activity between two individuals.

**AIDS:**

Unlike HIV, AIDS is not a virus but a syndrome that is caused by the HIV virus. A person is diagnosed with AIDS once their immune system deteriorates to the extent that it is too weak to fight off infection. AIDS is the final stage of HIV and if left untreated, will lead to death.

**Tuberculosis:**

Tuberculosis (TB) is a contagious infectious disease that primarily targets your lungs. The disease is transmitted from one person to another through the form of tiny droplets released into the air via sneezes or coughs. The combination of tuberculosis and HIV is life threatening as the suppressed immune system is unable to fight off the TB bacteria and as a result, people with HIV are a lot more likely to have tuberculosis progress to active disease.

**Malaria:**

Malaria is a disease that is caused by a variety of plasmodium parasites and is transmitted through infected mosquitos. When the mosquito bites an individual, the plasmodium parasite is released into the individual’s bloodstream. There are a multitude of life-threatening complications of malaria such as the swelling of blood vessels in the brain which is referred to as cerebral malaria and the accumulation of fluid in the lungs which impairs breathing and is referred to as pulmonary edema.

**Poverty:**

Poverty is the lack of a certain amount of possession and/or money. Epidemics are a result and cause of poverty. To elaborate, a community that cannot afford treatment for a specific disease will continue to suffer because of their impoverished state. Additionally, affordable health care and proper treatment are scarce in many countries which causes families to invest in treatment which could potentially leave them poverty-stricken.

**Drug-resistance:**

Drug-resistance is the reduction in the effectiveness of treatment due to a built-up resistance by the virus/parasite against the treatment. According to UNICEF, “in many parts of Africa, 70 percent of malaria cases are resistant to cheap existing antimalarials such as chloroquine and sulphadoxine-pyrimethamine.”

# Background

Communicable disease outbreaks are the leading causes of death in the African continent. According to AfricaCheck, HIV/AIDS and lower respiratory tract infections hold the first and second spot for being the top causes of death. In 2015, the WHO reported that HIV/AIDS had killed approximately 760,000 people. Furthermore, the WHO also reported that in 2015, tuberculosis killed 434,000 people and malaria killed approximately 403,000. These epidemics have continued to plague the African continent. Areas like sub-Saharan Africa are most affected as the majority of the countries within the region are still developing and lack the required resources to handle these extreme epidemics.

From a general perspective, these epidemics may seem to only act as major killers but in reality, these epidemics contribute to poverty and a lack of development in the nations affected. For example, a disease such as malaria negatively impacts a child’s schooling and social development. The children who are able to survive malaria without adequate medical care tend to develop both mental and physical impairment. According to UNICEF, “the cost of malaria control and treatment drains African economies, slowing economic growth by about 1.3 percent a year” (UNICEF).

Families in generally poor developing countries/regions may find themselves in a financially deprived state. Due to their inability to afford treatment, the family either suffers or invests into treatment leaving them even more poverty-stricken. This can be addressed by reducing the cost of various treatments in order to make treatments more inclusive and affordable.

There have been a considerably large number of initiatives that have started and as a result, there has been tremendous progress in combatting these epidemics. However, as poverty rates continue to increase, more and more effort is required to make sure death rates as a result of these epidemics do not increase as well. Millions of people across Africa still suffer from these various diseases and require adequate medical assistance.

# Key countries and organizations INVOLVED

**The Global Fund –**

The Global Fund, founded in 2002, is a partnership organization which was created with the intent to accelerate the end of malaria, tuberculosis, and AIDS as epidemics. This partnership organization raises around $4 billion a year in order to support programs that are run by professionals in the most negatively impacted communities. This Global Fund is one of the only organizations that specifies in only tackling tuberculosis, AIDS, and malaria.

**WHO –**

The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that was established on April 7th, 1948. The WHO collaborates with governments and various other partners to ensure the best quality of health for all people. The WHO publishes the well known ‘World Health Report’ and the ‘World Health Survey’. The WHO is also responsible for World Health Day. The WHO is an extremely active member in assisting with the fight against AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria.

**UNICEF –**

The United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) is a United Nations program that delivers humanitarian and developmental aid to children and mothers in developing areas. UNICEF is a big player in the battle against the malaria epidemic due to the number of children who suffer and are prone to this illness. UNICEF is a member of the United Nations Development Group (UNDP).

**Clinton Foundation HIV/AIDS Initiative –**

In 2002, former President Bill Cintron established the Clinton Foundation HIV/AIDS Initiative (CHAI) to reduce the gap in treatment access in the developing world. CHAI negotiates the reduction of prices regarding antiretroviral treatment with governments. CHAI also works to improve health care systems with a focus on the delivery of treatment. CHAI counties to work with governments against the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

**Global Laboratory Initiative -**

The Global Laboratory Initiative is coordinated by the GLI Core Group and supported by the WHO Global Tuberculosis Programme. The focus of this initiative is to act as a “collaborative platform for the development and uptake of practical guidance and tools for building and sustaining high-quality TB diagnostic networks” (WHO).

**US President’s Malaria Initiative –**

The President’s Malaria Initiative (PMI) was launched in 2005 with the intent of “reducing malaria-related mortality by 50 percent across 15 high-burden countries in sub-Saharan Africa through a rapid scale-up of four proven and highly effective malaria prevention and treatment measures” (PMI). These four prevention methods compromised of treated mosquito nets and a variety of sprays and therapies. The PMI is working with the US government to continue the fight against malaria.

# Timeline of Key Events

**1975** – The Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR) is established. This programme focuses on neglected infectious diseases that mostly impact poverty-stricken populations in developing countries within Africa, Central America, South America, and Asia

**2000** – The establishment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations. Goal 6 was to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases

**2001** – The Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS is published. This document addresses the international efforts that will be put forth to address multiple areas of concern regarding the HIV/AIDS epidemic across the world

**2004** – Antiretroviral treatment is introduced to Africa

**2015** – Adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Goal 3 is based on ‘good health and well-being’ and focuses in on the reduction of malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, and various other diseases.

# Relevant resolutions, Treaties, and events

**Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS –**

The Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS was published in June of 2001 at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session dedicated to HIV/AIDS. The meeting was very impactful as it recognized how serious the AIDS epidemic was across the world and called for international recognition, involvement, and commitment in the battle against this virus. This declaration acts as a guide and tool to help continue the fight against HIV/AIDS on an international level.

<http://www.unaids.org/en/aboutunaids/unitednationsdeclarationsandgoals/2001declarationofcommitmentonhivaids>

**Sustainable Development Goal 3**

Similar to the Millennium Development Goals, the Sustainable Development Goals compromise of various goals that address a variety of issues and have specific targets and clear deadlines. The Sustainable Development Goals were adopted 2015 and came as a replacement to the Millennium Development Goals. Sustainable Development Goal 3 is concerned with health and holds a focus on HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, and a multitude of other infectious diseases.

<http://www.who.int/sdg/targets/en/>

**UN resolution on ‘Consolidating gains and accelerating efforts to control and eliminate malaria in developing countries, particularly in Africa by 2015 and beyond’**

This is one of the many resolutions that have been adopted which is concerned with the issue of malaria and its rise in developing countries. The resolution breaks down and focuses on key aspects of the disease and ways of addressing the epidemic. As stated previously, this is one of the many documents concerned with malaria which can all be accessed on the UN Data Base for documents – link in the appendix.

<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/279/22/pdf/N1527922.pdf?OpenElement>

# Previous attempts to solve the issue

**The Roll Back Malaria initiative –**

The Roll Back Malaria initiative is a World Bank global strategy and booster program which started in 2005. The document published underlines the contributions that the World Bank will make in order to assist with malaria control. Furthermore, the initiative supports community service organizations, country-led programs, and various groups that financially assist with malaria control. This program is aimed at accelerating the malaria control process with hopes that malaria control will lead to mainstream goals such as poverty reduction and regional development programs.

**The Abuja Declaration –**

In 2001, the African Union made a pledge to “allocate at least 15% of their annual budget to improve the health sector and urged donor countries to scale up support” (WHO). Ten years after the Abuja Declaration, only one country had achieved the goal. Although 26 countries increased government expenditures which were allocated to health, 11 countries reduced it.

**Millennium Development Goal 6**

The Millennium Development Goals were established in 2000 and they compromise of eight goals with specific targets and clear deadlines for improving the wellbeing of the population of the world as a whole. The Millennium Development Goals have a primary focus on poverty but looked at various aspects of it. Goal 6 was to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases.

# Possible solutions

**Education –**

Educating communities in developing countries, especially within the regions of sub-Saharan Africa on how to avoid these diseases would have a large impact as not only would people learn how to handle being infected but they would learn how to avoid the infection in the first place. This is constantly being proven as an effective way to combat HIV/AIDS. Sexual education with a focus on how to avoid the transmission of an STD can positively impact large communities in developing countries. This is a very inclusive process as it invited both men and women to engage in acquiring information that could one day potentially save their lives.

**Funding for treatment –**

Tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, and malaria are advanced infections that require state of the art medical care and treatment. Fundraising for the supply of safe, affordable, and effective treatment as well as the distribution of this aid will benefit the millions affected.

**Reducing price of treatment –**

Collaborating with the governments of developing countries to make health care and treatment more affordable would allow for communities in a state of poverty to purchase the treatment without worrying about the financial impact it will have on them in the future.

**Implementation of supportive programs –**

There is no limit to the number of programs which can be implemented to combat these three epidemics. Continuing to work with governments by coming up with innovative and effective programs is a solid way of addressing the issue at hand.

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# Apendix or apendices

**Official UN Document System**

* Can be used to find multiple resolutions relating to the topic of concern
* <https://documents.un.org/prod/ods.nsf/home.xsp>