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“YOUTH EXPECTATIONS REGARDING THE UNITED NATIONS ”**

Panel 6 : Halting the spread of HIV/AIDS

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AIDS is a disease that currently touches an important part of the world's population. Even if the fight against AIDS is complicated and still faces many obstacles, positive steps have been achieved and the current solution designed to eradicate the infection can reasonably be viewed as efficient.

Introduction to the current global situation regarding AIDS

Nowadays, more than 33.6 millions of people are infected by AIDS, that is to say 0.8 % of the world population. The pandemic is spread on a global scale, however some groups of populations are much more threatened than others : poorer countries, especially Sub-Saharan Africa, are violently hit by the disease (for example in Botswana or Lesotho, HIV prevalence is of more than 20% !). Besides, specific groups have higher levels of prevalence than others : the homosexual population around the world is suffering from the disease in a larger extent, and over the past 5 years In Europe, a significant spread of the disease can be noticed among the drug user population. Indeed Today, up to 10 % of global HIV infections are due to drug use, of an estimated 15.9 million people who inject drugs worldwide, up to 3 million are infected with HIV.

As these groups of population are more exposed to the HIV than others, it is suggested that actions aiming at halting the spread of AIDS should target these groups specifically to increase efficiency in the fight against AIDS. Indeed one may stress that these groups of populations and more precisely the homosexual community in some developing countries are marginalized from states policies regarding solutions to AIDS. As a matter of fact, in a country where homosexuality is a crime it seems obvious that the society does not provide cures to the gay population (in states like Mauritania where the sentence to homosexuality can be death penalty it seems rather obvious that the government does not provide any help to homosexual populations victims of AIDS).

One may argue that the solution to this problem is to be provided by NGOs specialized in Human rights activities through awareness campaigns and reports, so that governments and local populations understand one's legitimate right to receive a cure independently of one's private life choices and sexual orientation.

Current mechanism aimed at halting the spread of AIDS

Treatment is a key element in the fight against AIDS. Thanks to the progress in the scientific field, new and very efficient techniques have appeared and show very encouraging results, for example the Fusion or Entry Inhibitors drug, approved to treat HIV in 2003 as well the Integrase Inhibitors drug from 2007, that enable patients to live a quasi-normal life.

Although a vaccination process does not exist yet, techniques such as antiretroviral treatments proved very positive results. For example, the percentage of pregnant women living with the HIV antiretroviral treatment for preventing mother to child transmission increased over the past years. In 2005 , the overall percentage in low and middle income countries was of 15 % , but in 2008 it reached a total of 45 % and reached an even higher rate in 2009, that is to say 53 %. As a matter of fact, one may notice an ongoing positive process that must be encourage and to continue.

Providing a treatment to people infected by AIDS is only one side of the solution. Indeed, prevention is a key element in the fight against AIDS and must not be forgotten. Both need to be done together and to an extent it is relevant to see prevention itself as a part of the treatment. It is specifically in the field of prevention that young peoples are likely to play an important role. The Youth is taking part actively in prevention through many initiatives, as the Vienna Conference held on July 2010 (and entitled "international AIDS conference") has stressed.

The Youth can play a key role in engaging in associations which work on consciousness-raising operations and prevention messages (condom use, fewer partners and delayed start of sexual activity can be very effective influential tools in the fight for the decrease of the spread of the disease)

Even if prevention can be a delicate task because of the moral values at stake and of different cultural views on the subject (for example the issue of the use of condoms in African States where the male populations is rather reluctant to use protection), the Youth can play an important role in discussion as well as awareness-raising campaigns are likely to help to change mentalities.

Improvements of the situation : steps achieved

Since many years, the number of patient treated has increased. In 2009, 5.25 million people had access to HIV treatment in low- and middle-income countries, accounting for 36% of those in need. This represents an increase of over 1.2 million people from December 2008, the largest increase in any single year. There is still a lot to do, but this increase is encouraging. Besides, very poor states like Rwanda are now able to reach universal access to treatment. It has received significant donor support and technical assistance. Zimbabwe has increased access by 50% in the past year - despite being heavily compromised politically and economically. And African states such as Burkina Faso through policies of free treatments are having a significant impact in the decrease of the HIV victims.

Future challenges and key obstacles

Obstacles to scaling up HIV treatment persist in most countries, including funding shortages, limited human resources, and weak procurement and supply management systems for HIV drugs and diagnostics and other health systems bottlenecks. One third of countries reported at least one or more cases when supply of HIV medicines has been interrupted in 2009. The economic crisis played an important role in this decrease of action of the international community. Besides it seems that States and International Organization have shifted their focus on other challenges like climate change and do not put enough emphasis on the AIDS issue.

Lastly, the treatment against HIV is a costly program that needs to be followed on a very long run. The treatment is to be followed throughout the life of the victim. And in this regard it is easily understandable that such a treatment represents a heavy cost for States and reduce such initiatives.



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