

Lesson Plan

AIDS in Africa April 19, 2001

Objectives

Analyze the legitimacy of the pharmaceutical companies' lawsuit.

Evaluate the impact of AIDS in Africa and the United States.

Determine the similarities and differences of the impact of AIDS in Africa and the United States.

Write a letter expressing ways that the United States can help Africa in the struggle against AIDS.

Standards

National Council for the Social Studies
IX Global connections, grades nine - 12

High school level, students are able to think systematically about personal, national, and global decisions, interactions, and consequences, including addressing critical issues such as peace, human rights, trade, and global ecology.

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning
Health, Level 4 (grades 9-12)

High school students should understand the social, economic, and political effects of disease on individuals, families, and communities

Materials

CNNfyi.com article, "AIDS drug battle ends, clears way for cheaper treatment,"
([scroll down on this page to view the article](#))

Chart paper, colored pens and pencils

Suggested time

One class period

Procedure

1. Survey the class to assess students' knowledge of HIV/AIDS. Discuss the AIDS situation in the United States and the world as well as prevention campaigns and

social implications. Ask students if they are aware of the international attention on Africa since reports listed staggering numbers of AIDS cases there.

2. Have students read the CNNfyi.com article, "AIDS drug battle ends, clears way for cheaper treatment," and ask the following:

What was a coalition of 40 pharmaceutical companies arguing in their lawsuit? What were some reasons given in the article regarding why the companies have dropped the lawsuit? Why do you agree or disagree with the pharmaceutical companies' lawsuit?

What is the Medicines and Related Substances Control Act? Why do you think it is important for a developing country to have access to cheap generic copies of patented drugs? How many people are infected with HIV in Africa? Why did Wilbert Pannenberg, a World Health Organization official, state that access to affordable drugs is a "human rights issue"? Why do you think this law suit would cause a public relations disaster for the pharmaceutical companies?

Review the quote by Simon Cohen, a patents expert, who said, "As far as the big pharmaceutical companies are concerned they were not making considerable sales in South Africa anyway because the drugs could not be afforded, so it is not as if they will have lost a big market." Explain the significance and meaning of this statement.

3. Divide the class into four groups. Assign each group one of the following topics: orphaned children, financial/economical consequences, availability/access to medicine and availability/access to education. Direct students to investigate the impact AIDS has had on their topic in both Africa and the United States.

Extension

Students can follow the HighWired.com classroom project The difference in AIDS and HIV. This project examines the origin, transmission, prevention and treatment of the disease, as well as the importance of education in stopping this worldwide epidemic.

Assessment

Have students present their findings to the class. They may create charts and graphs to present their information. Hold a class discussion about the similarities and differences from the impact of AIDS in the United States and Africa. Evaluate methods that have lessened the impact of AIDS in the United States and determine how these examples could be transferred to alleviate the situation in Africa.

Accommodations

Logical/mathematical Students can create a chart of the impact of AIDS on orphaned children, financial/economical consequences, availability/access to medicine and availability/ access to education in Africa. Students can also include ways to lessen the effects of AIDS.

Challenge

Inform the students that the Department of State is the lead U.S. international affairs agency, and the Secretary of State is the president's principal international policy adviser. Students can write a letter to Secretary of State Colin L. Powell giving specific examples of means that the United States can use to help people in Africa in their struggle against AIDS.

AIDS drug battle ends, clears way for cheaper treatment

April 19, 2001

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa -- A coalition of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies has withdrawn its lawsuit that threatened South Africa's ability to provide AIDS/HIV drugs to its citizens at cheap prices.

South Africa has more people living with HIV or AIDS than any other country in the world -- an estimated 4.7 sufferers.

South Africa's Medicines and Related Substances Control Act allows its health ministry to import cheap copies of patented drugs used to treat Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome and the virus that causes it, HIV, or human immunodeficiency virus.

The Pharmaceutical Manufacturers' Association of South Africa (PMA) and 39 international drug makers felt the law was unfair and threatened the profitability of their companies. Those corporations filed a lawsuit three years ago to prevent South Africa from importing cheap copies of their drugs or reproducing generic versions of patented drugs.

Public and human rights campaigners strongly opposed the legal action and the issue became a public relations disaster for the industry.

Celebrating victory

Thursday, Stephanus Cilliers, the lawyer for the pharmaceutical companies, made a request of Judge Bernard Ngoepe who presides over the Pretoria High Court. "By the consent of all parties," he said, "we would simply ask your lordship to note that the application is withdrawn."

As the announcement was made the public gallery in the court erupted into singing and chanting.

AIDS in Africa

More than 25 million of the 36 million people infected with HIV live in sub-Saharan Africa, one of the world's most impoverished regions.

In 2000, 2.4 million people in the region died from the effects of AIDS.

"This case should never have happened," said Kevin Watkins, of the British aid group Oxfam. "We have lost three years in the fight against AIDS, but it is a great victory for the people of South Africa and for the global campaign to make drugs more affordable."

AIDS in Africa

-More than 25 million Africans live with HIV-AIDS. In 2000 2.4 million died of HIV-related causes.

-In African countries AIDS is set to claim the lives of around half of all 15-year-olds.

-There are an estimated 12 women living with HIV in Africa for every 10 men.

-In S. Africa, 4.7 million people carry HIV-AIDS. The figure is expected to rise to seven million by the end of the decade.

-Botswana has the highest rate of HIV infection with an estimate 35.8 percent of all adults living with the disease.

-Life expectancy in Botswana has been cut to 44 years from 69.

-AIDS deaths are expected to rise sharply from around 120,000 in 2000 to an annual 635,000 by 2010.

Source: The United Nations and the South African government.

South Africa's Health Minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang said the government had not agreed to any deals in exchange for the drug industry move.

"You can trust the government," she said.

Profit concerns

World Health Organization official Wilbert Pannenberg said access to affordable drugs was a "humans rights issue."

But drugs companies, including GlaxoSmithKline, the world's largest supplier of HIV/AIDS medicines, U.S. firms Merck & Co and Bristol-Myers Squibb, Swiss group Roche and German group Boehringer Ingelheim, said the act threatened their business.

Mirryena Deeb, Chief Executive of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers' Association of South Africa, said: "If this type of legislation was applied to any other type of industry infringing their commercial rights, it would be regarded as a form of nationalization and they would pack up and go."

Simon Cohen, a patents expert with London-based law firm Taylor Joynson Garrett, told CNN: "It is early to say what the implication of this is but it is a very unusual step.

"I can't think of any similar issue concerning patents. Possibly in time of war, patents can be suspended for military reasons for a limited period. It may be that the level of the health problem in Africa is such that it is as serious."

Cohen said the decision does not have much of an impact on the pharmaceutical companies' profits. "As far as the big pharmaceutical companies are concerned, they were not making considerable sales in South Africa anyway," he said, "because the drugs could not be afforded, so it is not as if they will have lost a big market."