

## December Alert

The AIDS epidemic is a global emergency that affects people in every country on earth. According to UNAIDS, it is estimated that by the end of 2005, a total of 25 million people have died of AIDS since it was first recognized in 1981. This year, it is estimated that 2.9 million people died of AIDS-related illnesses and 4.3 million people were infected with HIV, a 10.3 percent increase from 2004. Two-thirds of the world's AIDS deaths were in Africa this year and 500,000 were infected with HIV because mothers did not have access to the right drugs.

World AIDS Day, December 1<sup>st</sup> focuses this year on ACCOUNTABILITY. As an action in solidarity with Global AIDS Alliance, we are focusing this month on **HEALTHCARE of HIV/AIDS in Africa and accountability of our governments to respond to the needs of this pandemic**. In Africa, 3% of the world's health workers struggle against all odds to combat 24% the global disease burden. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that sub-Saharan Africa is suffering a shortage of more than 800,000 doctors, nurses and midwives and an overall shortfall of nearly 1.5 million health workers. WHO has identified 36 African countries where the health related Millennium Development Goals are "very unlikely" to be achieved at their current level of health workers.

Western countries are beginning to respond to the needs in Africa. A new law pending in the US Senate would make fundamental inroads into the health care worker shortage in sub-Saharan Africa. The Health Workforce Investment Act would authorize \$200 million a year by 2009 for use by the US government in consulting with African governments and organizations and provide technical and financial assistance. The focus of the support would be on building and retaining a health care workforce; reduce brain drain by paying adequate salary and increase health worker safety and health care and expand training and educational opportunities.

### Send a postcard:

If you are outside the US, Global Action Alliance is an excellent resource for actions in your region at [www.globalaidsalliance.org](http://www.globalaidsalliance.org).

In the US, write to your Senator. You can call the Capital Switchboard at 202-224-3121 for information about name and address of your senators or go to [www.networklobby.org](http://www.networklobby.org) and put in your zip code for the name and address of your senators.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

I urge you to join Senators Durbin and Coleman in co-sponsoring the African Health Camacity Investment Act. There is a severe shortage of health workers in sub-Saharan Africa and this means that people are dying unnecessarily. As a global leader in fighting the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the US must also take the lead in helping African countries establish a stable health infrastructure and end their health crises.

Sincerely,

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### Background Information:

-This new law would make fundamental inroads into the health care workers shortage in sub-Saharan Africa, a shortage that costs lives every single day.

-The new Health Workforce Investment Act would authorize \$200 million a year by 2009 for use by the US government in consulting with African governments and organizations and provide technical and financial assistance.

-The focus of the US support would be on building and retaining a health care workforce, reducing brain drain by paying adequate salary and increasing health worker safety and expanding training and educational opportunities.

-The bill would require the US to help those countries that have not already done so to establish national plans on human resources for health with a focus toward systemic and sustainable change.

-The bill holds the US government accountable for supporting a sustainable health care workforce by requiring the government to monitor, evaluate and report on its successes and best practices.

**For more information:**

[www.globalaidsalliance.org](http://www.globalaidsalliance.org)

[www.UNAIDS.org](http://www.UNAIDS.org)

[www.actionaid.org](http://www.actionaid.org)

[www.care.org](http://www.care.org)

[www.wcc-coe.org](http://www.wcc-coe.org)