

Global Epidemics

6

READING 1

David Brown. "Clinton, Mandela: AIDS Threatens World Stability," 12 July 2002, in *www.washingtonpost.com*.

-- Discussion of Reading 1 -----

1. At what event did former presidents Bill Clinton and Nelson Mandela address the topic of AIDS? (the 14th International AIDS Conference in Barcelona, Spain)
2. What did former president Bill Clinton promise to do in the battle against AIDS? (He pledged to become a traveling campaigner in the effort to rally increased government commitment and political leadership in the global effort to prevent AIDS and treat people affected by it. He said he would go to Africa and India to lend visibility and support.)
3. What did former South African president Nelson Mandela call upon people to do? (He called upon people infected with HIV to reveal their condition and not be ashamed of it.)
4. Why were people in the AIDS community angry at South African president Thabo Mbeki? (Mbeki was the object of anger and scorn for his open interest in the theory that HIV was not the cause of AIDS.)

5. What did Mandela speak at length about? (He spoke about the need—and the payoffs—of treating people in developing countries with optimal antiretroviral therapy.)
6. Describe the story that Mandela told about a college student with AIDS. (Mandela arranged for this college student with advanced AIDS to get antiretroviral drugs. She is now up and active, has regained weight, and is supported by a monthly stipend from Mandela and his wife.)
7. Mandela said: “There is life after HIV/AIDS.” How convincing is this statement?
8. How many AIDS orphans were there in the world in 2002? How many were in South Africa? (There were 13.4 million AIDS orphans in the world, and 662,000 in South Africa, with the latter rising to 1.7 million by the end of the decade.)
9. How did the United States help underwrite AIDS prevention and treatment in 2002? (The U.S. government was spending \$800 million in overseas AIDS programs.)
10. By how much did Clinton think the United States should increase its financial support? (Clinton mentioned an additional \$2 billion a year as the size of a possible increase.)

READING 2

Philip P. Pan. “Report: China Faces ‘Titanic’ AIDS Crisis,” *The Washington Post*, 28 June 2002, A21

-- Discussion of Reading 2 -----

1. Explain why a United Nations team compared Chinese leaders to officers aboard the Titanic. (Chinese leaders have ignored the worsening HIV/AIDS situation. Thus, they are similar to officers aboard the Titanic, who refused to believe that the ship was sinking until it was too late.)
2. How many Chinese contracted HIV in 2001? (as many as 1.5 million)

3. According to the United Nations report, how many Chinese could be infected with HIV by the end of the decade? (Ten million Chinese could be infected by the end of the decade.)
4. Why did the U.N. officials pick the Titanic metaphor? (They said they picked the Titanic metaphor to emphasize that Chinese leaders could still avoid a disaster. The Titanic tragedy was preventable and so is the HIV/AIDS situation in China.)
5. What factors explain the poor response of China's leaders to the AIDS crisis? (The report blamed China's response on a lack of commitment by officials at all levels of government, insufficient funding for AIDS prevention programs, and a health care system that has all but collapsed in the Chinese countryside.)
6. Why is China's authoritarian political system the most sensitive obstacle in fighting AIDS in China? (International experience has shown that free flow of information and the emergence of independent, grass-roots organizations are critical to fighting AIDS, but China's ruling Communist Party is uncomfortable with both.)
7. What policies should the Chinese government implement in response to the AIDS crisis?
8. Write a one-sentence statement in your own words of the main idea of the article. (China is facing a severe HIV/AIDS crisis because of insufficient funding for prevention and a poor health care system, but the government could avoid a disaster if it educates the population and implements the correct policies.)

Vocabulary

Fill in the blanks with the correct words. Use each word only once.

grass-roots	terminal	suppressed	catastrophic
antiretroviral	authoritarian	protocols	epidemic
verge	frank	optimal	

The first diagnosis of AIDS was in 1981, and since then more than 20 million people have died from the disease.¹ AIDS has become a/an epidemic

1. David Brown. "Report on AIDS Offers Dire Prognosis," *The Washington Post*, 3 July 2002, A3.

that threatens the health of millions of people around the world. Currently, 42 million people are infected with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), the virus that causes AIDS.² Physicians are researching new drug protocols, and one of the most promising treatments is antiretroviral drugs, which offer the possibility of living a normal life with AIDS. Another focus of research is the development of a vaccine to protect against AIDS. However, although innovative medications are being produced every day, scientists may not be able to find a cure for this catastrophic disease.

Epidemiologists who study the characteristics of AIDS wrote two reports in 2002 that outlined the future course of the pandemic. The first report is by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), which is sponsored by the United Nations and the World Bank. Many UNAIDS experts believe that the scope of AIDS has been underestimated and that the world is on the verge of a crisis caused by the massive spread of AIDS.³ Supporting this belief, the U.S. National Intelligence Council report says that “by 2010 there will be between 50 million and 75 million cases of HIV infection in India, China, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Russia.”⁴ How the governments of these countries respond to the AIDS crisis will be a critical factor in limiting its devastation. In several countries, such as China, the subject of AIDS is suppressed. Because the authoritarian government does not discuss AIDS in a/an frank and open manner, “about one in six Chinese has never heard of the disease.”⁵

While the primary cause of AIDS is intravenous drug use, the HIV virus can also be spread through sexual contact and blood transfusions. Thus, the people at greatest risk are drug users, their partners, prostitutes, and their clients. Moreover, today large numbers of the heterosexual population are becoming infected. One of the optimal methods of AIDS prevention involves educating and counseling the public on the risky behaviors that can lead to illness. Public health campaigns have been organized in many countries, such as Kazakhstan, and these grass-roots campaigns have reduced the rate of new infections.⁶ Despite the fear of epidemiologists that the worst is yet to come, scientists and AIDS activists remain hopeful that one day this terminal disease will be eradicated.

2. “Intelligence Study Raises Estimate of AIDS Spread,” *The Washington Post*, 1 October 2002, A7.

3. *Ibid.*, A7.

4. *Ibid.*, A7.

5. David Brown. “Survey Finds China’s AIDS Awareness Is Lacking,” *The Washington Post*, 8 July 2002, A2.

6. Brown, “Report on AIDS Offers Dire Prognosis,” A3.