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Preventing and Reducing AIDS in Zambia for Future Success

There are many diseases in the world today that threaten the human race. One country that is highly affected by diseases is Zambia. Zambia is a country in the mid-southern region of Africa. The HIV epidemic causes the largest problem in the country of Zambia, and every year, around 45,000 people die from AIDS ("Zambia HIV/AIDS Numbers"). Research shows that AIDS is a huge problem in Zambia that needs to be addressed. However, the characteristics of the country of Zambia must be discussed and considered before a solution to the HIV epidemic is created.

Geographically, the country of Zambia consists of a wide plateau and unevenly distributed mountains. Zambia also has an abundant supply of fresh water sources. A few of these water sources include the famous Zambezi River and Victoria Falls; both are located in the Western part of Zambia. These two natural water resources are popular destinations for tourists. The Victoria Falls is shared on the southern side of Zambia with Zimbabwe. Other water sources in Zambia include the lakes Bangweulu, Tanganyika, and Mweru. These sources provide plenty of fresh water throughout Zambia. However, lacks of sanitation methods in parts of the country make it difficult to administer clean water. Zambia is a landlocked country surrounded by eight other countries in the southern part of Africa. These countries include the Dominican Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, and Angola. Zambia is a member of the organization COMESA. COMESA stands for Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa. Many countries in Africa are member of this association, which provides "economic prosperity through regional integration" ("Overview of COMESA"). Through COMESA, Zambia trades with the organization's other members. However, Zambia also trades with countries outside of COMESA such as China, Switzerland, and Kuwait.

A typical subsistence farm family in Zambia consists of a father, mother, and many children. The average number of children per family is six to seven (Sojkowski). The nuclear family often has the responsibility of providing for their extended family when help is needed. This sometimes includes living with the extended family. Children of the family are expected to help with the chores around the home and in the tribe. These chores may include working the fields, tending to their younger siblings, and helping their mothers with housework. Most rural Zambian families provide their own food through farming, hunting, fishing, gathering, and trading. Many of the citizens in Zambia do not have access to a reliable health center. The hospitals that are in Zambia have a small amount of medical staff and are quickly filled with patients. These patients are suffering from AIDS, malaria, and/or malnutrition. Many Zambians are struggling due to the lack of health care access, only having that which is available in their tribe.

On the farm in Zambia, the entire family must work together to complete chores and work the fields. Most families own only a small plot of land to grow and harvest their food crops. Some villages establish larger fields to help support the entire community. Some of the main crops grown in the fields include maize, sweet potatoes, groundnuts, cassavas, and millet. Other sources of food include hunting, raising domestic livestock, and fishing.

Although the lack of food security has been a recurring problem in Zambia, a bigger conflict has emerged. A disease has been rapidly spreading through the citizens of Zambia. This deadly disease is called AIDS, or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. If a person has AIDS, then they are HIV positive. HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. HIV and AIDS are the same disease, however, AIDS is the definition and late stage of the disease while the term HIV is used to describe the disease. To

clarify, the acronym AIDS is the late stage of HIV and describes what the disease does to your body, which is make your immune system deficient. The acronym HIV is the name of the disease. HIV causes an individual's immune system to cease from functioning properly. When the immune system is weakened and does not work properly, the person is more immune to many different diseases that usually end in death. AIDS is spread through sexual intercourse, pregnancy, childbirth, breast feeding, injection drug use, occupational exposure, and blood transfusions between individuals. The most common spread of HIV in Zambia is through sexual contact. Many Zambians have more than one sexual partner, which spreads the disease at an extremely dangerous pace. In Zambia, the estimated percent of adults living with AIDS is 13.5%; this calculates to about 980,000 adults in Zambia that are infected with HIV("The World Factbook:Zambia"). When groups of citizens in Zambia are infected with AIDS, it makes it difficult to produce their own food due to the health issues. Although HIV/AIDS is a disease, the stress that it puts on its victims has a major effect on the food availability in Zambia.

Along with the health problems, an individual with AIDS has difficulty doing normal activities such as working the fields or performing housework. Many of the farm families living in Zambia produce their own food through family or community fields. While there is an adequate food supply in rural areas, AIDS victims are frequently unable to harvest or collect the food. These individuals also need more food and nutrients to survive due to their weakened immune systems. This extra food is hard to rationalize; therefore, HIV patients are unable to receive their needed supplements. Since the symptoms of AIDS restrict the victims from collecting food, the children of HIV infected parents are also unable to receive the correct amount of nutrients. Without some of this food for the women to sell at the market, the families earn little to no money. All money that is earned is used to buy a scarce supply of HIV medication. Similar to a domino effect, AIDS makes it extremely difficult for the victim to receive proper food and medication.

Many of the farm families living in Zambia produce their own food through family or community fields. Without the energy or motivation to cultivate crops, the infected person and their families often suffer from lack of food. Along with taking medication, it is essential for the victim of AIDS to eat more to make up for the loss of nutrients from the disease. There is often a lack of sufficient funds and labor for these people to get the correct amount of medicine and food. If a family were to have enough money to pay for HIV treatment medication, then there would be little to no money left for food. These circumstances can lead to death of the infected person and problems of malnutrition within their family. In Zambia, there is some assistance in fighting the terrible disease of HIV/AIDS. There are organization trying to prevent the disease from spreading by informing Zambians about the risks of AIDS. USAID is an organization that provides support for HIV victims in Zambia. They help by providing financial support along with some food supplement to the infected people of Zambia. Other than the victims of the disease, the population most affected are the children. When their parents are unable to provide food and care, the children's lives are put at risk. Some children suffer from the disease starting at birth when it is passed on from their mother. Children can also become orphaned when their HIV infected parent passes away. Estimates of 690,000 children are currently orphans in Zambia due to AIDS("Country's Responses to the AIDS Orphan Crisis:Zambia"). Women are also at a disadvantage when it comes to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Cultural practices in Zambia force women to have sex with their husbands according to his desires. Women are also not allowed to suggest condom use to their husbands. Most of these men have several sexual partners outside their marriage. With women being forced to participate in sexual relations, they have little protection against AIDS. The HIV epidemic plays an especially negative role in the lives of women and children throughout Zambia.

Since 2001, the number of HIV infected Zambians has increased drastically. However, with the help of some organizations such as USAID and Dream Livingstone Zambia, the number of AIDS patients in Zambia has decreased slightly at an extremely slow pace. Research shows that the infected number of Zambians has increased by over 150,000 victims in the past decade ("The World Factbook:Zambia").

While this is true, there is not a publicized present day record of how many Zambians are infected with AIDS. A present day record of this must be included in the action plan of the solution in order to effectively solve this problem. According to research from organizations that help AIDS victims in Zambia, the numbers of HIV infections have slowly been decreasing with the organizations' help. In spite of this, the cure for the HIV problem in Zambia will require much more work than what these groups can accomplish alone.

The organizations for HIV help in Zambia have a difficult time reaching farm families in the rural areas of the country. Very few schools are located in these areas and the schools that are provided do not accommodate needed information to the children. Some children are able to attend primary schools (grades one to seven) if the school is within the area of their tribe. However, this is difficult because the schools are slowly deteriorating with out-of-date textbooks, a shortage of teachers, and unsanitary learning facilities. Even this minimal education is extremely costly to families. Children are usually not allowed to go to secondary school (grades eight to twelve) since it is more expensive than primary school. Higher education is very rare, since there are only two universities in Zambia. As expected, these schools are even more expensive. Many of these children are not able to attend school due to a lack of funds, or the inability to travel the distance to a schoolhouse. According to these hardships and the growing AIDS problem in Zambia, the situation continues to worsen for farm families. Additional assistance in education and information is needed in Zambia's rural areas to reduce the risk and harm of the HIV virus. Just imagine if the number of Zambians affected by AIDS was greatly decreased. With the problem of HIV/AIDS reduced, the food production would increase greatly. This would be the result of less Zambians secluded to bed rest because of the disease, and more free to work in the fields and harvest crops. By increasing the workforce in Zambia, the amount of crop production would also be increased. Individual families in Zambia would not only have extra food to eat, but the entire country would gain additional crops for consumption, or perhaps exporting. Once additional crops are cultivated and harvested, the family may sell the crops at local markets to receive an income. This increase in the production of crops would lead to a more developed and sustainable economy by expanding the amount of exports traded with other countries. Overall, the reduction of the HIV disease in Zambia would create a greater availability of work labor to harvest crops, therefore increasing the amount of goods available to families in the country and as potential trading opportunities.

The decrease of HIV rates in Zambia would not only benefit those directly affected by the disease, but also the entire country. This decrease would lead to a greater sustainability in food and goods. Therefore, a growth in population could be expected in the years ahead. Although this could be seen as a problem with having more mouths to feed, it must be remembered that without AIDS, the growing population would be able to continue therefore, increasing the amount of food that is produced. The fertile farmland in Zambia provides the opportunity for a large amount of harvested crops. With more harvested goods, an increase in industrialization could also be expected in the near future. With all of these increases, the economy will continue to grow throughout the years to come, improving the country of Zambia overall. The economy is not, by any means, the only aspect that would improve with the reduction of AIDS. The environment would also be benefitted if the AIDS epidemic were reduced in Zambia. The reduction of AIDS would provide more labor to cultivate and harvest crops, therefore improving the environment by producing more plants and clean air. The larger workforce and crop supply will also provide more products from the farms to sell and trade around the country and the world. By improving the economic development in Zambia, the poverty rate in the country would be reduced. More jobs would become available from the new sources of production in the rural and urban areas. Smallholder farmers and urban dwellers would both benefit greatly from the reduction of AIDS with the production of more crops for rural areas, and more jobs in the urban areas. As a result, Zambia would be more flourishing than it has been in many years.

Since the discovery of the HIV epidemic in 1981, there have been many projects to prevent AIDS around the world. My plan revolves around educating the healthy citizens of Zambia in an effort to prevent the spread of AIDS. The first part of the plan includes convincing the corrupt government of Zambia to admit that AIDS is a significant problem. Once this is successfully completed with the help of statistics, data, and the country's best interests at heart, the action plan will proceed to the prevention and treatment of AIDS. This project could be partnered with the United Nation's MDG of helping with medical care for HIV/AIDS victims. The education class would be conducted in most every school throughout Zambia in the hope that educating the children will better prevent AIDS in the future. Since children in some communities do not have the opportunity to go to school, an educating committee will be assigned to travel to these communities and then proceed in informing the citizens about the consequences and prevention of AIDS. Once the education part of the process is started and has begun to run smoothly, there will be medicine, food, and prevention supplies such as condoms sent out to communities with cases of the HIV virus. These supplies will be sent to the communities that need it the most, and then will proceed to provide for the less needy communities. The members of the Zambian communities will be stronger and healthier with the new supplies, allowing them to work, cultivate important crops, and make various supplies. The more workforce that the community has, the more food that can be provided to the community. With these new food and medicine rations given by this plan, many more community members will be healthier and therefore, able to work more efficiently. Another part of this plan will promote female empowerment by conducting meetings and classes specifically for women. This part will also contain a campaign for women's power and independence. When the women become physically and mentally independent from men, the women will be more likely stand up for themselves in the marriage, or use their independence to enter a career field and become economically dependent without the need for a husband. This new found emotional independence will prevent the spread of AIDS in a marriage and potentially increase the growth of the economy with more jobs held by women. Once the children have been educated, the women's independence campaign started, and the supplies have been delivered to the communities that are in need, the communities can then grow and begin to flourish.

Zambia's large problem of the quickly spreading HIV epidemic must be addressed and resolved. According to the characteristics of the country, most of the population in Zambia lives in farming communities ("Zambia-Poverty and Health") . However, these communities have very little to no choices for children's education and minimal access to health care. Due to these disadvantages, many families that live in farming communities are more prone to get AIDS. If the number of AIDS victims were reduced, more crops could be produced using the enlarged workforce, which will improve Zambia's economy overall. Therefore, this plan has been made to revolve around reaching those farming communities, especially the communities that are poorer than the others. With the help of the United Nations, the schools in Zambia and the farming communities will be educated about the risk of HIV and how to prevent the disease. The women's dependence on the economy instead of their husbands in the newly created independence campaign will increase the prosperity and diversity of Zambia's economy. Supplies, such as medicine and food, will then be sent over by the United Nations in an attempt to help the AIDS victims and their suffering families. Once these communities are educated and treated, new and improved plans may be created to continue the prevention of AIDS in Zambia. This action plan, made with the consideration of Zambia's culture and characteristics, will improve the future success of Zambia, which depends upon the prevention and reduction of the HIV epidemic.

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