

Prices of Medicines

Price remains paramount in determining **access to medicines**, including HIV/AIDS drugs, in developing countries & is a key determinant of the impact & reach of scarce resources.

When faced with **unaffordably priced medicines**, poor & marginalised people have the limited options of selling off assets to raise the required money, though for the majority it means **simply doing without**.

Unaffordably priced medicines compromise the following of treatment regimes, consequently promoting the development of drug resistance, which **threatens any continued success** with the treatments.

While the US\$406 billion-strong drug industry researches, develops, markets & prices medicines for the industrialised world, there is no mechanism to make newer medicines affordable to developing countries.

Source: Médecines Sans Frontières, 2001

Newer drugs, which are usually under patent & more expensive than those off-patent, are expected to become **more expensive** with the implementation of the WTO agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) scheduled to be completed by 2006 (MSF, 2001).

Campaign objective

The Stop AIDS Campaign of the UK Consortium on AIDS & International Development believes that **universal access to comprehensive HIV/AIDS care & treatment**, including anti-retroviral therapy, is crucial in monitoring an effective response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Young people world wide have inherited a lethal legacy that is killing them & their friends, their brothers, sisters, parents, teachers & role models. An estimated 11.8 million young people aged 15-24 are living with HIV/AIDS.

Source: Student Stop AIDS Campaign, SPW Report, 2003

Student Stop AIDS Campaign was launched to educate & inform young people, mobilising their energy & commitment to stop AIDS.

Young people can make a difference by:

- building youth **solidarity**
- training young people to **catalyse change**
- empowering young people to find **solutions** & strengthen **political will**

HIV/AIDS care & treatment

Campaigning is essential because the HIV/AIDS epidemic can not be addressed unless universal access to comprehensive care & treatment in developing countries is ensured.

HIV/AIDS care & treatment:

1. **improves life quality** & survival, & reduces the number of children orphaned by AIDS.
2. **supports prevention** by reducing viral load & therefore decreasing the likelihood of HIV transmission.
3. **reduces stigma & discrimination** since the availability of anti-retroviral drugs can "normalise" HIV/AIDS.
4. encourages the **involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS**.
5. **reduces socio-economic impact**. The provision of affordable or free treatment reduces the asset-stripping effect of HIV/AIDS for families struggling to cover health care, nutrition & funeral costs, & alleviates the impact of poverty on HIV/AIDS affected households.
6. **reduces spread of infectious diseases** such as tuberculosis & other sexually transmitted infections common to people living with HIV/AIDS, through early diagnosis & treatment.

Recommendations

The UK & other donor governments must **promote lowered prices of medicines** & ensure that the TRIPS agreement does not prevent developing countries from **scaling up care & treatment programmes**.

The UK government can support lowered prices for medicines through:

- supporting a global approach to pricing in which developing countries pay only the **minimum price** for patented medicines
- working to **facilitate competition** amongst generic manufacturers in developing countries
- supporting **bulk purchasing**
- supporting a **global drug price database**

Help ensure TRIPS does not jeopardise care & treatment programmes through:

- respecting & supporting prioritisation of **public health** in trade agreements
- ensuring that least developed countries should not have to implement pharmaceutical patenting
- allowing production of **generic medicines for export** to developing countries
- supporting monitoring of impact of international trade law on **access to medicines & human rights**

Campaign with us

Student **Stop AIDS** launched in September 2003 & seeks to build a new social movement of young people as the key agents of change.

Stop AIDS Societies undertake awareness raising activities working alongside other student groups such as **MEDSIN, UNYSA, STAR & People & Planet**.

The campaign support unit is based at Students Partnership Worldwide (SPW)
Web page: www.spw.org
Contact e-mail: spwnetwork@gn.apc.org
Join a society:
www.spw.org/campaigns/stopaidssociety.htm

Main source: Access to Care & Treatment, Stop AIDS Campaign, 2004

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**CAMPAIGN
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