

Women's and Children's Health in Africa

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Women and children throughout the world face many challenges. One of the most difficult of those challenges deals with women and children's health. Our country may be fortunate enough to have healthcare, accessible hospitals, and sanitary living standards; but other countries are not as fortunate. Of the 44 poorest countries in the world 32 of them are located in Africa. Most of Africa's countries do not have the means to address the problem of healthcare and that results in the rapid spreading of diseases and death across the continent. Burundi, Zimbabwe, and The Democratic Republic of Congo are only three of the countries in Africa that have issues with the health of women and children. In each of the countries women and children are exposed to diseases, malnutrition, and many other life threatening problems concerning health. Women and children in Burundi, Zimbabwe, and The Democratic Republic of Congo have serious health issues that they have to fight through; like AIDS, malnutrition, and other diseases.

Part 1: Women's and children's health in Burundi

With an average of one doctor for every 30,000 people in Burundi, it is easy to see why so many women who are infected with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) only get sicker as the disease progresses to become Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). *(Brennan, Kristine, 2005)* As of 2005 about 13% of all women living in Burundi cities are HIV positive. HIV progresses to become AIDS, and in Burundi approximately 40,000 of the deaths in a year is from AIDS. *(Brennan, Kristine, 2005)*

HIV and AIDS are so common among the women and children in Burundi because children receive it from their mother at birth if their mother is infected with it. Women receive it from unprotected sex, rape, or contracting it from their mother; women are more likely to contract HIV than men. HIV and AIDS are not the only diseases present in Burundi; this is due to the unsanitary conditions. With a lack of clean drinking water, there is a high rate of parasitic diseases such as cholera, malaria, schistosomiasis, and tuberculosis (TB). Burundi has one of the highest death rates in the world from TB. *(Brennan, Kristine, 2005)* Infants have a higher risk of contracting Tuberculosis than adults, and people with AIDS have a higher risk. *(Brennan, Kristine, 2005)* This is because AIDS destroys your immune system. So many people are susceptible because of the high rate of AIDS among people. Children are susceptible to diseases in Burundi from the moment they are born. If an infant's mother has HIV or AIDS, (which 13% of women in the city do), the infant will obtain it through birth or from the mother's breast milk. As they become children they are exposed to nutritional deficiencies because of the poverty that many people in Burundi experience. In Burundi Kwashiorkor is a childhood condition caused by a diet that is too low in protein. *(Brennan, Kristine, 2005)* This causes retarded growth, diarrhea, lightening of the skin and hair, and in fatal cases, liver failure. *(Brennan, Kristine, 2005)* Without the help that the women and children need in Burundi, these health problems will never go away. *(Brennan, Kristine, 2005)* The more women infected with HIV and AIDS means that there are more children that will be infected also. The cycle needs to stop or nothing will change and innocent children will keep dying.

Part 2: Women's and children's health in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe many women and girls will die each year due to pregnancy related complications. (www.usaid.gov) Making the maternal mortality rates grow at levels between 1300 to 2800 women. (www.usaid.gov) Of the women and girls who do not die, 26,000 to 84,000 of them will suffer from disabilities caused by complications during pregnancy and child birth each year. (www.usaid.gov) The infant mortality rate is at a shocking seventy three to every one thousand babies will die. (*Barnes-Svarney, Patricia, 1999*) It is a sad fact that many children will not live to see their fifth birthday. Some of them will not even see their first. To make these pregnancies and childbirths even more dangerous, one-fourth of all pregnant women are thought to be HIV positive in Zimbabwe. (*Barnes-Svarney, Patricia, 1999*) As of 1999, over 1 million people were estimated to be infected with HIV. (*Barnes-Svarney, Patricia, 1999*) Most of these HIV positive people will end up having AIDS. The reason for this is, they do not have the proper medications, doctors, or even hospitals to help prevent and stop this disease from developing into full-blown AIDS. AIDS and HIV are not the only diseases found in Zimbabwe, there are also cases of malaria, cholera, sleeping sickness, and typhoid. The sleeping sickness, also known as African Trypanosomiasis, has affected many Zimbabwe women. (*Barnes-Svarney, Patricia, 1999*) This disease comes from the tsetse fly. (*Barnes-Svarney, Patricia, 1999*) If a person is bit by one of these flies then the person will have a fever, swollen lymph nodes, and will eventually die. (*Barnes-Svarney, Patricia, 1999*) The most common place where Tsetse flies have been reported to live are areas around the Zambezi river. (*Barnes-Svarney, Patricia, 1999*) There is ways to prevent this disease from occurring. The most effective way is spray; to try to keep the

Tsetse flies away. Outbreaks of cholera is also a dangerous disease killing many women. The biggest cause for Cholera is African women and children inability to access safe and clean water. Malaria is a huge contributing factor to the high mortality rate in Zimbabwe. Since Zimbabwe is very humid and hot, the people that live there are more acceptable to contract the virus of Malaria from mosquitoes. Even though the death rate among women and children is high from malaria, more and more of them are being saved with the creation of vaccinations. As a result of all these diseases the average life expectancy of women in Zimbabwe is 42 years of age. (*Barnes-Svarney, Patricia, 1999*)

Part 3: Women's and children's health in The Democratic Republic of Congo

Women and children face many issues in the Democratic Republic of Congo concerning their health. One of these issues deals with wife beating. (*Heale, Jay, 1999*) African males beat their spouses to either feel in power or because of anger. In result, women are expected to work for men. (*Heale, Jay, 1999*) Women living in the Democratic Republic of Congo are also expected to birth six to seven children during their lifetime, which 10% of all babies born will die shortly after they are born. (*Willis, Terri, 2004*) They provide all the cares for their baby, while in the womb and after it is born. (*Willis, Terri, 2004*) Thus making the newborn mortality birth rate high, 1/3 of all children die before the age of 5. (*Heale, Jay, 1999*) The health of women and children is also endangered by the disease of HIV and AIDS. In 2001 1.3 million Congolese were living with either HIV or AIDS. This number keeps growing because people are not talking precautions toward the disease and they have no way to prevent HIV turning into

AIDS. Also this disease goes unchecked because there is only one doctor for every 14,000 people living in the Democratic Republic of Congo. (*Willis, Terri, 2004*) This fact results in many deaths that could have been prevented or treated, but there is just not enough medical equipment or doctors to help all those people. A plethora of the diseases in the DR of Congo come from the low supply of clean and safe water. Only 25% of the population in the entire country is able to access sanitary water. (*Heale, Jay, 1999*) The disease of Tuberculosis is also another major concern in DR of Congo. DR of Congo ranks tenth as one of the worst countries for Tuberculosis. Tuberculosis affects many children; it is spread through the air from person to person. It attacks the lungs first, but can eventually affect the whole body. It can be treated and cured by medicine, but DR of Congo finds it difficult to have enough of the medication in supply. They have to have it flown in from other countries they usually take a while to reach the women and children in need. As a result, Tuberculosis is one of the biggest causes of death in the country. Sadly, because of all these diseases afflicted on women in the DR of Congo the average women lives to be about fifty one years old. (*Willis, Terri, 2004*) This is a very young age to die for women, considering that in the United States the life expectancy for women is 78 years old. Making the conditions for women and children and their health dangerous and could be greatly improved. Another factor for the bad conditions in the DR of Congo is malnutrition. The poverty rate is so low in this country that people cannot afford food. Children are forced to eat clay, which does not digest well. These diseases and other cases that cause death are just some of the tragic things that happen in the DR of Congo to women and children.

In conclusion, African countries are faced with many tremendous factors that cause premature death among women and children. The three countries that are greatly afflicted in Africa are Burundi, Zimbabwe, and The Democratic Republic of Congo. These countries experience many hardships concerning their health, especially for women and children. The biggest of these hardships is the horrible disease of AIDS. This disease is painful and eventually fatal. This is one contributing reason why the mortality rates in these countries are devastatingly high. Also, some other reasons are the many other diseases that infect women and children from either insects or unsanitary water supply. Malnutrition plays a key part in the deaths because children and women are starving from not being able to buy or find food. As you can see the health conditions for women and children in these three countries are awful and often result in fatality.

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Alyssa Randall

8453 South Wild Oak Drive
West Jordan, UT 84081
(801) 386-3686 cellular
aarsmile@yahoo.com

Education

- Copper Hills High School-anticipated graduation June 2012
- Salt Lake Community College-concurrent enrollment

Chaniece Pollock

4939 West 8660 South
 West Jordan, UT 84081
 (801) 867-4152 cellular
Chaniece94@gmail.com

ACHIEVEMENTS

- ❖ 3.997 cumulative grade point average
- ❖ CHHS Drill Team Athletic Letter - 2 years
- ❖ All Region Academic Drill Team - 2 years
- ❖ 4.0 grade point average held six quarters
- ❖ Future Business Leaders of America
- ❖ National Honor Society

EXPERIENCE

Copper Hills High School Drill Team

April 2009 – current

Vice President Costumes – Officer responsibilities include leading the team, budgeting, research and design for team costumes, accessories etc, as well as High School Association rules in accordance with dance routines, dancers, and coaches. Design logos for spectators as well as team, ordering, collecting funds and distributing products ordered. Also responsible for team readiness prior to taking the floor at competition meets. Member responsibilities include being prepared both physically and mentally for competitions.

National Honor Society

September 2010 –

current

Member – responsible to maintain a minimum of a 3.7 grade point average as well as leadership roles/experience and continued community service.

Future Business Leaders of America

September 2010 –

current

Member – responsible to attend meetings with peers, discuss future business ideas, continue building leadership skills as well as business research.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

- ❖ Up with Downs Organization Volunteer children
- ❖ Kids against Hunger – food packaging
- ❖ Food/Clothing
- ❖ Mentor/Tutor 3rd & 4th grade
- ❖ Homeless Outreach –

EDUCATION

Copper Hills High School – anticipated graduation June 2012
 Salt Lake Community College – concurrent enrollment

