IMUN 2026 Research Report

African Union Issue #4: The question of treatable diseases in sub-Saharan Africa.

Treatable diseases remain one of the most prominent public health issues in Sub-Saharan Africa despite immense international efforts. Although many diseases present in the region can be prevented, managed, or even cured through existing medical treatments and practices, millions of individuals continue to suffer from these diseases due to limited healthcare services, access to necessary medicine, and implementation of preventative measures. The most common diseases found in the region are malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS ("Ending Disease"). These diseases heavily pressure healthcare systems within the affected regions as the number of effected people continues to rise. According to data provided by the World Health Organization (WHO), although Sub-Saharan Africa carries over 24% of the global disease burden, only 3% of the world's healthcare workers are located there, and it accounts for less than 1% of global health expenditure (Pinto). This extreme deficit creates pressure on local medical infrastructures, which heavily compromises the delivery of necessary, life-saving treatments across the continent.

Sub-Saharan Africa carries a disproportionate amount of global disease burden. According to the WHO, around 95% of global malaria cases and deaths occur just within this area (Ending disease). Historically, combatting widespread diseases relied on preventative measures such as antimalarial medication and insecticide-treated bed nets. However, these traditional anti-insect measures have faced diminished efficiency due to rapidly increasing biological threats. Mosquitos carrying diseases in African nations have developed resistance against standard insecticides, rendering nets significantly more important. This evolutionary adaptation highlights the constant need to create new preventative measures, such as upgrading to a dual-active ingredient nets, deploying new malaria vaccines, and utilizing ecological

vulnerabilities to exterminate evolving vector species, all of which become innefective over time. Furthermore, HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis continue to affect millions, even though effective treatments which reduce mortality rates are available ("UNAIDS rallies").

The core challenge for the African Union first responder is not a deficit of treatment options, but rather severe lack of adequate healthcare infrastructures, trained medical professionals, and access to essential medicines. Poor sanitation, clean equipment, and a lack of clean water exacerbate the spread of these preventable diseases (Higgins). Even more so, conflicts, political instability, and economic/financial challenges within Member States prevent the delivery of necessary healthcare services to those living in rural areas. For instance, the ongoing armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo has left over 70% of healthcare facilities in ruins, turning them completely non-functional due to violence and destruction ("Public Health").

Throughout the years, the African Union, along with various international organizations such as the European Union (EU) and the German Development Agency (GIZ), have implemented numerous initiatives to resolve the issue of treatable diseases. The €100 million Global Gateway health packages sought to expand healthcare institutions within the nations, enhance health security, and expand technology for digital health solutions. Additionally, the launch of the CARMMA Plus Campaign enabled progress tracking, commitments and innovations showcasing, partnerships, and online decision-making through their continental digital hub website ("African Union"). The European Union and the African Union have been jointly supporting and utilizing the African Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) and scaling up their partnership to improve and strengthen national public healthcare frameworks ("AU and EU strengthen").

Debate should focus on measures to improve access to healthcare services, especially in rural areas, and solutions to reduce the number affected by treatable disease outbreaks in all African regions. Delegates should consider and develop strategies to expand healthcare infrastructure, increase the availability of affordable medicines, improve on vaccination programs, strengthen water and sanitation systems, and address shortages of medical professionals. This requires addressing distinct regional burdens, such as vaccine-preventable meningitis epidemics across the Sahelian belt as well as the surge of climate-driven dengue fever outbreak in the regions located in North Africa. Debate may also be centered around foreign aid, the role of international partnerships, and technological advances in improving public health results, and delegates should prepare accordingly.

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