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**STUDY GUIDE**  
**World Health Organisation**



**Improving the access to cures for  
treatable diseases in Africa**



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## II. Letter from Chairs

Dear Delegates,

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to ZAMUN 2025's World Health Organization committee! As your chairs, we are truly honoured to guide you through this exciting and unforgettable experience.

This year, we will be tackling one of the most pressing global challenges—treatable diseases affecting Africa. The complexity of this issue lies in its roots, which stretch across social, economic, and environmental factors. It is not just about medicine; it is about policies, access to healthcare, and international cooperation. Our study guide provides an overview of the topic, and we hope it will serve as a valuable resource in your preparation. However, we strongly encourage you to go beyond this material and conduct thorough research, especially on your country's stance.

In addition, we ask you to prepare both a position paper - a document containing a detailed overview of the government's policy regarding the discussed topic and an opening speech, which you will present at the start of the committee. If public speaking makes you nervous, do not worry—you are not alone.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to reach out to us.

Best of luck with your preparation. We cannot wait to see you all in April!

Sincerely,

Aneta & Maxim



### III. Committee Introduction

The **World Health Organization (WHO)** is a specialized agency of the United Nations responsible for global public health. Established in 1948, WHO's primary mission is to combat diseases, set health standards, and coordinate responses to health crises worldwide.

WHO has played a vital role in global vaccination programs, pandemic responses, and improving healthcare infrastructure in developing nations, particularly in Africa. Through international collaboration, research funding, and technical support, WHO continues to advocate for **universal healthcare and equitable access to medicines**.

### IV. Topic Introduction

Access to cures for treatable diseases in Africa remains one of the most pressing public health challenges of our time. Despite advancements in medical research and the availability of effective treatments, millions of people across the continent continue to suffer from diseases that are preventable or easily treatable. Malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, and neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) disproportionately affect African populations, exacerbating poverty and impeding economic development.

For instance, in 2023, malaria cases surged by approximately eleven million compared to 2022, reaching an estimated 263 million cases globally, with **94% of these cases occurring in Africa**. This resulted in nearly **600,000 deaths**, predominantly among children under five years old. Similarly, tuberculosis remains a critical concern, with Africa accounting for a substantial proportion of the global incidence. In 2023, tuberculosis overtook COVID-19 as the leading cause of infectious disease-related deaths globally, with approximately 8.2 million new cases reported, marking a record high since WHO's tracking began in 1995.

One of the primary barriers to healthcare access is the excessive cost of essential medicines and treatments, often due to intellectual property laws and market monopolies. Many African nations struggle with weak healthcare infrastructure, including insufficient medical facilities, a shortage of trained healthcare workers, and inadequate supply chains that hinder the distribution of life-

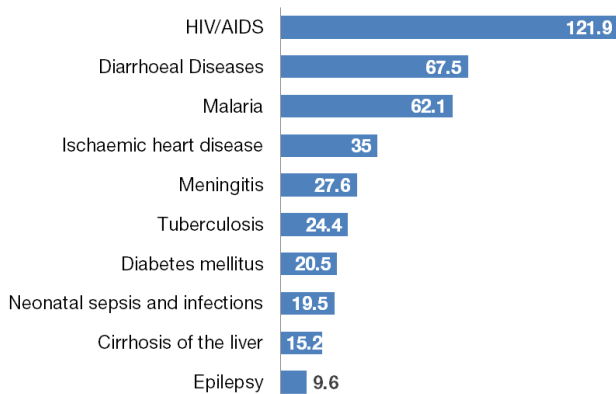


saving drugs to remote and rural areas. Additionally, systemic issues such as corruption, political instability, and economic constraints further obstruct progress.

Global organizations, including the World Health Organization (WHO) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have implemented initiatives to improve access to medicines, such as reducing drug prices, promoting local pharmaceutical production, and expanding vaccination programs. However, long-term solutions require stronger international cooperation, increased investment in healthcare systems, and policy reforms that prioritize public health over profit.

With this in mind, the issue of ensuring universal access to affordable, effective treatment is not just a regional concern but a global responsibility. It is therefore important to critically assess existing frameworks, explore innovative funding mechanisms, and develop sustainable solutions that guarantee equitable healthcare access for all.

**Disease causing the most deaths in Africa**  
Deaths per 100,000 people per year



Source: WHO, 2012



## 1. Historical Background

Africa has faced a long-standing struggle against treatable diseases such as **malaria, tuberculosis (TB), HIV/AIDS, and neglected tropical diseases (NTDs)**.

For example, in the early 2000s, there were around 250 million cases of malaria globally each year, with the majority in Africa. However, thanks to international efforts, including the Roll Back Malaria campaign and the distribution of insecticide-treated nets and antimalarial drugs, the number of deaths has decreased significantly. By 2020, malaria cases had dropped to approximately 229 million globally, with Africa still accounting for 94% of cases and deaths.

Furthermore, the HIV/AIDS epidemic began to spread rapidly in Africa in the 1980s and 1990s, leading to millions of deaths. At its peak, over two million people were dying from HIV-related causes annually. However, by the mid-2000s, the introduction of antiretroviral therapy (ART) helped significantly reduce deaths. Today, more than 25 million people in Africa are living with HIV, but death rates have been reduced by 55% since the peak in 2004 due to improved treatment and prevention efforts.

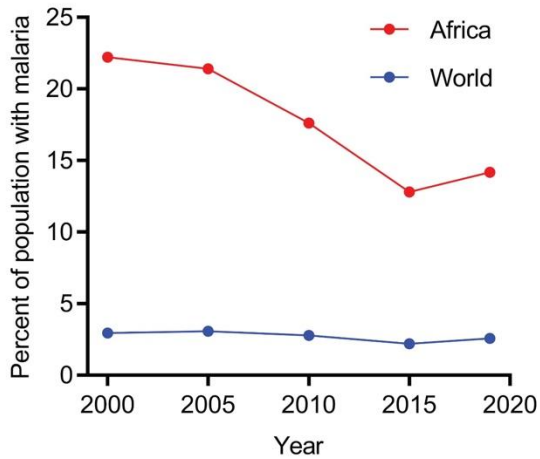
In addition, tuberculosis still affects 2.5 million people annually, accounting for a quarter of global deaths. Diarrheal diseases, responsible for 20% of child deaths in the early 2000s, have decreased by 52%. However, non-communicable diseases like heart disease and diabetes now make up 40% of deaths, a significant rise.

While medical advancements have made treatment possible, barriers such as excessive costs, weak healthcare infrastructure, and lack of local pharmaceutical production continue to limit access.

Key global initiatives, such as **The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria** and **Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance**, have worked to improve access to essential medicines.

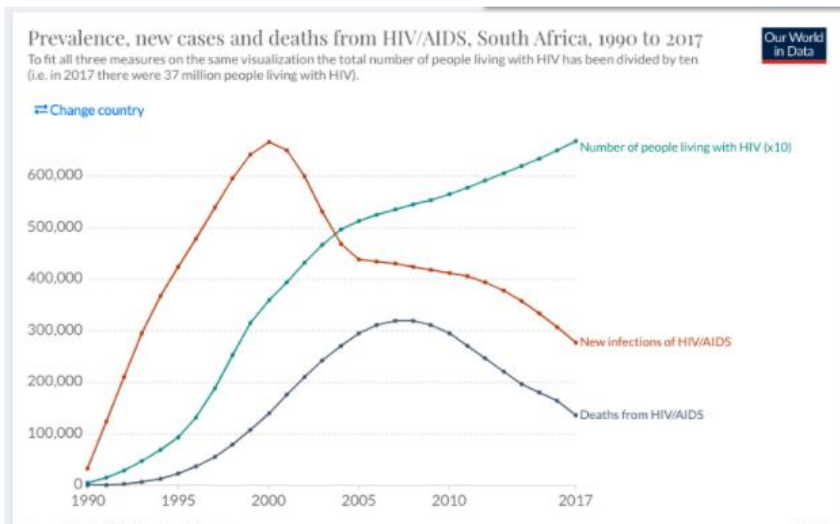


However, gaps still exist in reaching rural populations and ensuring long-term sustainability.



Graph comparing the percentage of people with malaria in Africa versus the world. The number of people with malaria in Africa has decreased since 2000.

Source: Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation (Global Burden of Disease - 2019)







## 2. Key Terms

- **Communicable diseases** are illnesses caused by infectious agents that can be transmitted from person to person
- **Universal Health Coverage (UHC)**: Ensuring that all individuals and communities receive essential health services without financial hardship.
- **Essential Medicines**: Drugs that meet the priority healthcare needs of a population and should be available, affordable, and of assured quality at all times.
- **Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)**: Legal protections, such as patents, which grant exclusive rights to pharmaceutical companies, often making medications more expensive and less accessible.
- **Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs)**: A group of infectious diseases that primarily affect populations in low-income regions, often receiving little attention or funding for treatment.
- **Pharmaceutical Industry**: Companies involved in the research, production, and distribution of medicines, often playing a key role in drug pricing and availability.
- **Local Pharmaceutical Production**: The development and manufacturing of medicines within a country or region to reduce dependence on foreign imports and improve affordability.
- **Compulsory Licensing**: A legal mechanism that allows governments to authorize the production of generic versions of patented drugs without the consent of the patent holder, typically in public health emergencies.
- **Healthcare Infrastructure**: The system of hospitals, clinics, medical professionals, and supply chains that ensure the delivery of healthcare services to a population.
- **Global Health Initiatives (GHIs)**: International programs and organizations, such as The Global Fund and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, which aim to improve healthcare access and combat diseases in developing countries.
- **Access to Medicines**: The ability of individuals, especially in low-income regions, to obtain necessary medications at an affordable price, without barriers such as cost, availability, or distribution challenges.
- **Non-communicable diseases** are chronic illnesses that are not infectious and are often related to lifestyle, genetics, or environmental factors.





### 3. Key Stakeholders

- **Governments:** Responsible for healthcare policies and funding.
- **WHO & UN Agencies:** Provide international health guidance and funding.
- **Pharmaceutical Companies:** Develop and distribute medicines.
- **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):** Work on healthcare access programs.
- **African Union (AU) & Africa CDC:** Regional organizations focused on public health.

### V. Points to Consider

- **Economic Barriers:** How can treatments be made more affordable?
- **Healthcare Infrastructure:** What measures can improve access to medical facilities?
- **Local Pharmaceutical Production:** How can Africa become self-sufficient in drug manufacturing?
- **Policy Reforms:** How can patent laws and trade policies be adjusted to improve accessibility?
- **International Cooperation:** What roles do international organizations and donor countries play?



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## VI. Research

This study guide serves as a foundation for your research. However, you are expected to investigate further using credible sources. Consider the following research steps:

- Understand **your country's stance** on global health and access to medicine.
- Identify **past actions and policies** your country has taken regarding healthcare in Africa.
- Examine **international agreements** related to intellectual property rights and generic medicines.
- Study **existing WHO programs and their impact** in African nations.

## VII. Position Paper

Each delegate must submit a **position paper** outlining their country's stance on the topic. Your paper should include:

1. **Your country's position** on access to medicines in Africa.
2. **Previous policies and actions** taken by your country regarding global healthcare.
3. **Proposed solutions and contributions** your country is willing to make.

Position papers should be well-researched and provide a clear strategy for tackling the issue at hand.



**After completing the Position Paper, please submit it through [mymun.com](https://mymun.com) as a .pdf file. If you do not manage to send it via mymun you may send it through discord.**

### **VIII. Further Reading/Sources**

To enhance your understanding of the topic, explore the following resources:

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7120372/>

[https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/dec/11/global-health-deaths-malaria-rise-drug-insecticide-resistance-climate-crisis-funding-un?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/dec/11/global-health-deaths-malaria-rise-drug-insecticide-resistance-climate-crisis-funding-un?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

- **WHO Reports on Global Health:** [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)
- **Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria:** [www.theglobalfund.org](http://www.theglobalfund.org)
- **UNAIDS Reports on HIV/AIDS:** [www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org)
- **Africa CDC Health Strategies:** [www.africacdc.org](http://www.africacdc.org)

### **IX. General Recommendations**

We strongly encourage each Delegate to establish their stance early in the committee and ensure their research is as thorough as possible. Well-informed Delegates will play a crucial role in shaping the discussions and influencing resolutions. It is essential to remain aligned with your country's policies and engage in meaningful dialogue. Additionally, we highly recommend active participation in bilateral and multilateral negotiations, as these efforts will be instrumental in shaping the final resolution.



## **X. Addressing the Committee**

All Delegates are expected to maintain diplomatic decorum and engage in constructive debate. Any form of hate speech, discrimination, or disrespectful behaviour—including racism, sexism, or personal attacks—will not be tolerated. Given the complexity of this issue, Delegates must recognize the weight of their decisions and the potential impact on global health and humanitarian concerns. Every intervention should be made with professionalism and a commitment to finding sustainable and equitable solutions.

