

Resolution on Debt Reduction and HIV/AIDS

Let it be resolved that:

Catholic principles of economics and social justice acknowledge that when debt servicing becomes oppressive and denies individuals, communities and nations the access to basic human services, debt servicing becomes immoral. Debt cancellation and relief programs become a moral requirement.

Rationale

All people have a God-given right to adequate nutrition, shelter, basic health care, education, environmental sustainability and a secure livelihood. However, due in part to heavy debt burdens, 95 percent of the world's 40 million people with HIV/AIDS do not have access to care, treatment and life-extending medicine.

In the words of UNICEF's annual "State of the World's Children 2002," the AIDS pandemic is responsible for "destroying families, communities and nations," causing life expectancy to "plummet" while AIDS orphans "overwhelm family networks, social services and health care institutions." AIDS is "crushing the attempts of countries all over the world to put human development and the rights of women and children first.

Debt burdens have forced the poorest countries to shift scarce resources away from basic health services and infrastructure, which are necessary for reducing the prevalence and severity of HIV/AIDS infection. With responsible and morally dictated debt cancellation, nations will be empowered to free up local resources in order to finance HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment programs; to supplement educational budgets; and to invest in public infrastructure projects that will provide basic services such as access to clean drinking water.

Responsibility for many of the nations' debt crises lies with lenders as well as with borrowers. A preponderance of debt in heavily indebted countries is illegitimate. This debt was incurred by self-serving regimes for projects that citizens neither decided upon nor benefited from. It was siphoned off by corrupt leaders and/or incurred under predatory repayment terms that prevent current governments from meeting their citizens' basic human needs.

Call for Specific Actions:

USCMA requests its members to:

- Urge their respective members to participate and support ministries that provide care to those already HIV infected, especially in heavily indebted countries
- Urge their respective members to commit themselves to set aside time for prayer and reflection on the moral implications of usury for themselves and their communities
- Urge U.S. policymakers to support 100% cancellation of sub-Saharan Africa's debt owed to the IMF, World Bank and other multilateral and bilateral donors, especially the debt of countries most impacted by HIV/AIDS, in order to free up resources to be redirected for a response to the HIV/AIDS crisis and to other poverty reduction programs
- Press the members of the House of Representatives to pass HR 4524, known as Debt Relief Enhancement Act of 2002
- Urge the U.S. Government to back poor countries' requests for a fundamental review of the World Trade Organization's Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) provisions, to ensure that priority is given to national health emergencies within these provisions and that poor nations achieve easy access to affordable anti-HIV/AIDS medications