AFRICAN UNION

TOPIC A: AIDS Orphans
TOPIC B: Sustaining Democratic Institutions

Dear Delegate,

Welcome to the African Union and WASMUNSA. I’m your chairperson, Mariecris Gatlabayan. I attend the University of Washington, majoring in psychology and English. Hence, I will go over your position papers very thoroughly. By ‘thoroughly,’ I mean that will be very interested in your ideas and how you express them. Words, after all, are the tools the UN uses to solve the worlds problems. Through sharing ideas and negotiates can solutions arise.

I am Anne Pacheco, the moderator for the African Union Committee. I am a senior at the University of Washington, majoring in International Studies with a focus on American Foreign Policy. I recently traveled to South Africa on a study abroad program and therefore have some first-hand knowledge on the issues that will be discussed in this committee. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.

Kendra Robinson is the African Union secretary and will be in charge of the pages that will deliver messages concerning the topics for you to other delegates.

The two topics the African Union will undertake are 1) AIDS Orphans, and 2) Sustaining a democratic government. In my opinion these are very interesting and important topics that affect Africa and other parts of the world. As delegates, representatives of your assigned country, you are responsible to learn as much as you can about the issues and try to create a viable solution/resolution that can be passed. It is important that you not only look at the perspective of ‘your nation,’ but those of other countries that may differ from your own. In doing so, you place yourself in a better position to negotiate with those who may not necessarily agree with you.

We look forward to meeting you. Good luck on your position papers and we’ll see you in April,

Mariecris Gatlabayan
African Union Chair

Anne Pacheco
African Union Moderator

Kendra Robinson
African Union Secretary
The African Union

Finding the Organization of African Unity (OAU) unable to fulfill the goals of the African people, members of the OAU developed the African Union (AU). The OAU has been blamed for being lenient with dictators and lacking action when it came to government corruption and the violation of human rights. There are high hopes for the African Union. Granted, with more power than the OAU, the AU has the power to “intervene” against genocide and war crimes. Ratified by two-thirds of the OAU, the African Union became a reality on May 26th, 2001. By July 9th, 2001, all 51 of the countries of the OAU ratified the Constitutive Act. On July 9th, 2002 the African Union came to power and left behind the OAU.

The AU itself is loosely based on the European Union. However, members of the AU strive to create and organization that will suit their needs and perspectives. AU will be an organization run by Africans to better the lives of Africans. In addition, there is a movement towards solidarity and pride in the African Union. Under the AU, they can come to solutions together. However, others are weary of the newfound mutual dependence on each other. It is the same reluctance to cause friction that rendered the OAU inadequate. Jackrie Cilliers (African Political Analyst) notes it might prove, at times, to be a hindrance. Afraid to cause friction, the AU may choose to not discuss controversial issues (ex. Zimbabwe’s elections).

Topic One: AIDS Orphans

Most often, the general focus of AIDS/HIV is placed on those who are physically suffering from the disease itself. However, HIV/AIDS affects the loved ones and the community of those infected. Presently, there are 13 million orphans that have lost either one or both of their parents to AIDS. The outlook for the future is even grimmer with estimations of 25 million more AIDS orphans by 2010. The area hit the hardest is sub-Saharan Africa. The ramifications of such a large number of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS affect entire countries as a whole.

The statistics, however, do not reveal the trials orphans face daily. Before they inevitably lose one or both parents to AIDS, they are forced to watch their parents health slowly and painfully decline. Statistics show that if one parent is dying of AIDS, there is a high probability the other parent will also suffer from AIDS. This may lead to psychological and emotional stress. With parents left too sick to work, less income is generated leaving their children at a higher risk of malnutrition, inadequate housing, clothing, and health care. In addition, older siblings face the added responsibility of taking on the ill parent/s’ responsibilities. This places an added strain on the child’s life. Often children are forced to drop out of school to work and support their family once one or both

parents die of AIDS. UNICEF shows a noticeable disparity between the percent of school attendance between children with both parents and those who are orphaned. Instead of getting an education, children undertake the task of working up to 40 hours a week to generate income.2

Once orphaned, they face even more difficulties. If a parent died without taking the necessary actions, children and widows may be denied their inheritance. If both parents die, the orphan’s future becomes even more precarious. A majority of the time, siblings are split up to live with extended family. Already facing a limited income, the new additions to the family can further entrench the adoptive family in poverty. Another possibility is to be left totally on their own. There are a significant amount of homes run by children, supporting their own siblings and those who are left to the streets.

Another effect of becoming orphaned by AIDS is the susceptibility to labor exploitation, rape, prostitution, and crime. AIDS orphans also face discrimination and mistreatment, further negatively affecting their psychological, emotional, and social development.

AIDS orphans also affect the community and the general future of the country as well. A whole generation of adults is slowly dying away. Badly needed professionals that could improve the economy and help the sick are diminishing in number. The high percentage of orphans forced to abandon their education to work also forebode a negative future for developing countries that need economic growth. In addition, women are often the sole providers of orphaned children. Limited means to provide for orphans may force them into prostitution, thus greatly increasing the risk of contracting HIV and AIDS.

It is important to note that the similar dilemmas are facing other orphans in Africa, those who are orphaned by malaria, tuberculosis, sleeping sickness, and so on. By 2010, 106 children are predicted to become orphans; AIDS accounts for only 25 million.3 In addressing the needs of AIDS orphans, you are also addressing the needs of the rest of the orphan population.

History of the AIDS Problem

Two decades ago when the AIDS epidemic became a real threat, few countries responded quickly. Lacking knowledge of the destructive nature of the disease they did little to prevent its spread in the early stages of the epidemic. As a result of the slow reaction, nations are now facing an epidemic too complex and overwhelming that it cannot be solved on a short-term basis. The delayed process of providing the services and education to community led to countless people becoming infected and dying. In the

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2 Children on the Brink 2002, p10
3 Children on the Brink, p3
beginning of the heterosexual HIV/AIDS epidemic only a minority of people were infected. However, as the number of partners increased, the majority became more susceptible to becoming infected. Also, another factor is reluctance to use condoms during multiple sexual relations increased the risk of HIV/AIDS becoming a major epidemic. Hence, HIV/AIDS was able to pervade society, becoming easily communicable. Eventually those who do not have multiple sex partners became vulnerable to becoming infected. With a majority of the young and middle-aged population becoming ill with AIDS, more and more children began to be orphaned. And as the number of HIV/AIDS contracted increase dramatically each year, the numbers of AIDS orphans also dramatically increase.4

**Bloc Positions**

One of the central factors that contribute to the number of AIDS orphans is the alarming rate of AIDS victims. One of the controversies over the treatment of AIDS is the high cost of medicine, specifically the use of generic drugs

*Pharmaceutical companies:* They invest a lot of money in creating life-saving drugs. Their sales fund research, paying their hard working researchers. In addition, generic drugs violate the researcher’s intellectual properties. The drugs produced by pharmaceutical companies are manifested by their own hard work. Generic drugs copy their formulas, effectively stealing their ideas and taking away their profits.

*African countries:* As developing countries, they lack the funds to buy the amount of the medicine needed. Costs are too high even after pharmaceutical companies lowered their cost down to $15,000 a year.5 Most African cannot afford to spend that much because they make-up to a few hundred dollars a year. Generic drugs offer a cheaper alternative, costing about $350 to $600 a year.

**Past UN Action**

In 1999, two conventions were ratified that defined and guaranteed the rights of children and bound countries to protect those rights. 191 countries ratified the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC), while 165 countries ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (LEDAW). Each of these conventions directly affects the women and children experiencing the effects of AIDS. Countries are responsible for protecting the rights and providing for the needs of children and women affected by the AIDS pandemic.

On June 2001, the UN General Assembly Special Session, on the “Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS” made a commitment to preventing HIV/AIDS contraction, treating and supporting those affected by the disease. The convention resulted in two main

goals that the countries are dedicated to accomplishing. First, nations must create plans and strategies to support orphans, families, communities, and children suffering from AIDS by the year 2003. Second, the strategies developed must be implemented by the year 2005. In April 2002, 21 West and Central countries met for the first time to work together and develop such plans. The UN, UNAIDS, UNICEF, and USAID are just a few of the organizations dedicated to the ongoing effort to better the lives of AIDS orphans.

**Proposed Solutions**

Tackling the issue of AIDS orphans is an enormous task. It can be approached in 2 ways: preventative measures and aid to those already suffering the effects of HIV/AIDS.

**Prevention:**

- How do you propose to make medicine available to your country?
  - In treating parents that are already suffering from HIV/AIDS, the number of future orphans can be reduced.
- What measures should be taken to prevent contracting HIV/AIDS?
  - Another way to prevent AIDS orphans is to prevent AIDS parents. Education can increase the knowledge on how to protect oneself from contracting AIDS. Sexual education can also help those already orphaned by AIDS. Statistically they are more likely to contract AIDS. Some orphans may resort to prostitution to support themselves and their family. In addition, orphans are more vulnerable to rape.

**Support**

- What actions should be taken to support AIDS orphans and the people who care for them?
  - The strain of losing ones’ parent and the discrimination AIDS orphans may face can be very traumatizing. What services can be offered to alleviate some of their suffering? In addition, forced to earn a living, orphans drop out of school. Without an education, they forced to have a very limited future. What strategies can be used to keep AIDS orphans in school? The strain of supporting AIDS orphans further increases the poverty family and communities they are already experiencing. How do you propose to help the community support orphans?

**Topic 2: Sustaining Democratic Government Institutions**

“The bad news about democracy is that it doesn’t bring changes fast enough and the good news about democracy is that without it you cannot be sure of any changes at all” Bill Clinton. 

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6 “Children on the Brink.”
7 “Solutions to Nation’s Problems Within, Says Clinton,” Africa News Services, September 25, 2002
Bill Clinton’s statement was made during a lecture on “Democratization and economic development,” at the Nigerian Institute of International affairs (NIIA). From it we can deduce one of the central drives towards democracy: to change. As a developing country, the avenue of democracy can open the floor for change and new ideas and solutions to develop. Democracy also serves to attract investors. They are more likely to invest in a nation that is politically stable and adheres to similar democratic principles. However, the development of a solid democratic government takes a lot of the time. This is evident in American struggle to fully recognize the promises in the constitution as we fought to emancipate the slaves, grant women suffrage, make segregation illegal and so on. Perhaps one of the most difficult problems African nations face is poverty and the corruption of government officials. Currently, Africa is losing $150 billion dollars a year\(^8\) due to government officials abusing their positions. As a result, prices of “goods” are forced to increase. This leaves Africans in an uncomfortable position: having to pay more and lose investment opportunities. One of the most controversial topics of discussion is the Zimbabwe election, in which corruption negated the democratic principle of people having a say in the government. The need to root out corruption is a serious issue that needs to be addressed by countries to further develop as a democratic government. Though Zimbabwe’s elections are critiqued, Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan and the Comorros have all held successful elections, further establishing themselves as democratic nations.

Though a solid democracy offers a firm foundation to build a strong and self-sustaining nation, the problems go beyond the structure of the government. Africa is faced with overwhelming poverty and life threatening diseases. The Abia State governor (Nigeria) states that democracy has not fulfilled the role when it comes to economic planning and alleviations of poverty. Democracy, as a structure must first be solidified and organized before results can occur. In the mean time, there should be a general push towards the economic development and provide services for the ill.

History of the topic of Sustaining Democratic Governments

The eighties and nineties were known as the “third wave” of democracy.\(^9\) Numerous countries made the transition from authoritarian to democratic governments. The transfer of power sometimes transpired through violent actions, such as revolutions. In Latin America, military dictators were overthrown. In Germany, the Berlin Wall crumbled. And in Africa, dictators, such as Mali’s Moussa Traore and Malawi’s Kamuzu Banda, were forced out of office. (Chapter One) South Africa also became a democracy in 1994. (Chapter One) Other countries made the movement toward democracy without overwhelming violence, such as the elections in Nepal. Monarchies also became more

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\(^8\) Corruption: Zeus Tolerance for Africa, Africa News Service; September, 18 2002
inclusive and participatory, creating opportunities for the people to have a say in the government. During the third wave, the percentage of democratic nations rose dramatically from 46% of the world having some form of democracy in 1980 to 68% in 2000 (Chapter One). Though there was a general movement toward democracy in the later half of the twentieth century, the rewards have been limited. Looking toward democracy as a possible solution to the problems that inflict their nations, regions such as Eastern Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa, are still experiencing an increase of poverty. In addition, some countries do not adhere to the guidelines of a democracy. Countries, like Cameroon and Togo, hold single party elections, while other countries have reverted back to the authoritarian form of government.

Bloc Positions

African Union

There is a growing sentiment towards self-government in relation to the UN. Africa’s main focus, in terms of democracy, is to end the need for such assistance. They are looking for assistance from the UN in monetary aid and NEPAD (the New Partnership for Africa’s Development) to develop their democracy. NEPAD is a program developed by African leaders and supported by the G8 (8 of the most industrialized nations) that is devoted to end poverty, increase growth and development, and a commitment to democracy. In addition, a growing concern of African Nations is the possibility of creating an independent and democratic nation, when it is dependent upon the funds and aide of Industrial nations’ commerce and government. The AU is also indignant of some of the criticism they receive when they are not able to act swiftly and effectively enough against corruption and armed conflict. At the time of the Zimbabwe elections, the OAU was in command and they did not have the power to intervene. While several G8 nations (the 8 most industrialized nations), such as the UK, make millions selling weapons to factions in Africa, Middle East, and Asia. Though the AU has not fully addressed the Zimbabwe elections, they are refusing membership to Madagascar for its own election violations. Generally, they are weary of the discrepancy between the reality of globalization and democracy. “We’re focusing on the need to democratize institutions that currently serve global apartheid, like the world bank, the IMF, and the WTO” Salih Booker.

G8 Nations

Generally, they support AU’s efforts toward democracy. They are pushing for strict measure and diligence in the fight against corruption in the government and the creation of a stable democratic government to protect the rights of their people. As industrial nations, they are willing to offer financial packages to countries that strive to

adhere to and practice democracy. However, they believe that they’re other nations in need of money. In addition, they are more likely to invest in a nation that democratically stable because it would be a better investment.

Past UN Action

Since the 1990s, UNESCO has been working with OAU and numerous United Nations agencies to form democratic governments in Africa. In 1993 the UNDP gave $3 million dollars to the OAU, part of which goes to the development of democratic institutions.

Also in 1993 the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action deemed the right to participate in one’s government an integral part in the development of human beings and the exercise of one’s human rights. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action held UN countries responsible for protecting the rights of human development and human rights: “Consequently, the right to development includes the place of individuals in civil society, their participation in running public affairs at the national and community levels, their personal, economic and social security and their capacity to determine and realize their potential.”12 In 1998, sessions were held to discuss and plan the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Amongst the numerous issues discussed, it recognized that the development of a democracy protects human rights and ensures the development of its people. According to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action the “United Nations system, in particular those acting in the field of development and human rights, must align their capacities to respond adequately to the complex and diversified needs relating to the implementation of the right to development” (paragraph 21). The 1998 sessions exposed the actions taken to accomplish the task of creating a sustainable and true democracy. UNDP was in the process of creating a policy outlining ways to protect essential aspects of a democratic government: freedom of expression, elections, equal rights for women, and an overall focus on solidifying democratic institutions. UNESCO provides seminars to help in the development of a democracy. Other UN organizations have focused on providing education and training in order to improve the opportunities in and qualities of their democratic nation. In 2000, the UN General Assembly met and made a commitment to the

12 “Coordination of the policies and activities of the specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system related to the coordinated follow-up to and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action,” Substantive Session of 1998, New York, 6-31 July 1998. Paragraph 21
http://srch0.un.org/plweb-cgi/fastweb?state_id=1034271140&view=esa&docrank=4&numhitsfound=998&query=democracy&docid=7122&docdb=esa&dbname=allesa&sorting=BYRELEVANCE&TemplateName=predoc.tmpl&setCookie=1
protection of human rights, the support for democratic governments and freedom (Human development report). Part of that commitment involves improvement of living conditions: such as ending poverty, providing education, and working together to improve development.  

Proposed Solutions

- How do you propose to end government corruption?
  - Corruption undermines the purpose of a democratic government. Billions of dollars that should be going towards economic development and medical aid, are going into the pockets of dishonest government officials. Numerous suggestions have been formulated: from a strict peer review system, taking account of each government official’s money and assets, and a convention to discuss solutions and commitments to the formation of democratic government.

Conclusion

It is necessary to address the issue of plagiarism when it comes to turning any paper at all. If there is any evidence of plagiarism in your position paper you will have to rewrite it. As for the rest of your position paper I expect a well-thought out paper.

It is no secret that the two problems assigned are difficult to resolve. The UN and other organizations are still in the midst of sorting it all out. However, this is an opportunity to engage in that same process and to hopefully come to a full understanding of the problems that affect not only Africa but the rest of the global community. When developing your resolutions keep in mind the perspective of your assigned nation. Would your people agree with the solution you proposed? Also be aware of the perspectives of other nations. Diplomacy is a delicate balance between protecting the interests of your nation while maintaining peaceful and fruitful relations with other countries. Most importantly, take advantage of the opportunity to learn about your country and the inner workings of the global community. It is not often people get the chance to get a full understanding of how the UN works and to get a glimmer of the rewards and disappointments of diplomacy.

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Bibliography

African Union


Topic One: AIDS Orphans


Topic Two: Sustaining Democratic Institutions


