

CHAPTER 23**Critical Thinking Activity****East Africa****AIDS**

Read the following excerpt provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and answer the questions that follow.

AIDS is mostly a rural issue [in the developing world]. More than two thirds of the population of the 25 most-affected African countries live in rural areas. Information and health services are less available in rural areas than in cities. Rural people are therefore less likely to know how to protect themselves from HIV and, if they fall ill, less likely to get care. Costs of HIV/AIDS are largely borne by rural communities as HIV-infected urban dwellers of rural origin often return to their communities when they fall ill. HIV/AIDS disproportionately affects economic sectors such as agriculture, transportation, and mining that have large numbers of mobile or migratory workers.

AIDS undermines the sustainability of development. People are dying before they can pass on knowledge and expertise to the next generation. A study in Kenya showed that only seven percent of agricultural households headed by orphans had adequate knowledge of agricultural production. In Kenya's Ministry of Agriculture, 58 percent of all staff deaths are caused by AIDS, and in Malawi's Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation at least 16 percent of the staff are living with the disease. One study found that up to 50 percent of agricultural extension staff time was lost through HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. In the first ten months of 1998, Zambia lost 1,300 teachers to AIDS—the equivalent of around two thirds of all new teachers trained annually. The sale of productive resources to care for the sick and pay for funerals diverts funds away from long-term development.

AIDS threatens food security. The loss of productive members of society is severely affecting household capacity to produce and buy food. Fostering AIDS orphans or hosting and caring for sick relatives reduces the amount of food available for each household member. Evidence from Namibia shows widespread sale and slaughter of livestock to support the sick and provide food for mourners at funerals. This jeopardizes the livestock industry and longer-term food security and survival options.

AIDS undermines agriculture because of its toll on the labor force. AIDS has killed around seven million agricultural workers since 1985 in the 25 hardest-hit countries in Africa. It could kill 16 million more before 2020. More than a third of the gross national product of the most-affected countries comes from agriculture. In contrast to other diseases, AIDS mostly devastates the productive age group—people between 15 and 50 years. Up to 25 percent of the agricultural labor force could be lost in countries of sub-Saharan Africa by 2020. AIDS reduces productivity as people become ill and die and others spend time caring for the sick, mourning, and attending funerals. The result is severe labor shortages for both farm and domestic

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work. Labor-intensive farming systems with a low level of mechanization and agricultural input are particularly vulnerable to AIDS.

AIDS affects women disproportionately. . . . Some of the traditional mechanisms to ensure widows' access to land contribute to the spread of AIDS—for example, levirate, the custom that obliges a man to marry his brother's widow. Unfortunately, initiatives to stop these practices may leave widows without access to land and food. Biological and social factors make women more vulnerable to AIDS, especially in adolescence and youth. In many places HIV infection has been found to be three to five times higher in young women than in young men. In several countries, studies have found that rural women whose husbands had died of AIDS . . . had no legal rights to their husbands' properties.

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1. Give two reasons why AIDS is mostly a rural issue in Africa.

2. Explain how AIDS in Africa affects food security.

3. What could be done to lessen the impact to widows of AIDS victims in Africa?

4. Describe several differences between how AIDS affects victims in the United States compared to how it affects them in Africa.
