



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on July 24, 2012

Hillary Clinton Pledges 80 Million to Global AIDS Effort

In launching the first U.S.-based International AIDS Conference in more than 20 years, advocates are pushing for more attention and a boost in government funding for the 31-year-old epidemic. Dumping more money onto the already mounting pile of global AIDS funding could realistically cure the pandemic, supporters said Sunday during the event's opening ceremony.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton attended the conference Monday to announce [\\$80 million](#) in new funding, while offering up an ambitious goal to eliminate all HIV-infected births. Speaking at the event, Clinton asserted that the taxpayer-funded dollars will assist in providing men and boys with voluntary circumcisions and women with life-saving medications in an effort to help the global community reach their goal of an "AIDS-free generation."



While supporters contend that the U.S. government is not spending enough on the AIDS effort, government funding for the disease is already [on the rise](#):

Federal funding for HIV/AIDS increased by \$5 billion since 2008, with \$22.25 billion budgeted for domestic programs this year, according to a report [PDF] from the Kaiser Family Foundation. The majority of those funds — \$15.6 billion — are for health care and treatment services. The Obama administration released millions in emergency funding to bolster HIV programs, including \$40 million in 2011 and an additional \$35 million to be distributed this summer to ease the burden on AIDS Drugs Assistance Program (ADAP).

In her speech, Clinton said the United States is pouring millions of dollars more into studies to protect individuals who are prone to HIV infections, including drug users, sex workers, and homosexual and bisexual men. "If we're going to beat AIDS, we can't afford to avoid sensitive conversations," she [affirmed](#). "I've heard a few voices from people raising questions about America's commitment. We will not back off. We will not back down."

"We are all here today because we want to bring about that moment when we stop adding names," Clinton continued, "when we can come to a gathering like this one and not talk about the fight against AIDS, but instead commemorate the birth of a generation that is free of AIDS." An "AIDS-free generation," Clinton [averred](#), will be one in which:

- No child is born with HIV.
- Children, teens, and adults will be at significantly lower risk of acquiring HIV as they grow and age than they are now.



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- And people who do catch HIV get treatment to prevent disease progression to full-scale AIDS.

Clinton championed U.S. support for its effort in providing more than 400,000 circumcisions since last December. She also boasted that the President's Emergency Fund for AIDS Relief will grant South Africa an additional \$40 million to bolster plans to offer voluntary circumcisions for nearly half a million men and boys next year.

Topping off her speech, Clinton also [called](#) for offering women "more power" in the AIDS fight, including free access to abortion and birth control so every woman can "decide when and whether to have children. This is true whether they are HIV-positive or not."

"I agree with the strong message that came out of the London summit on family planning earlier this month," she continued. "There should be no controversy about this — none at all."

Other supporters at the conference said there are measures already developed to curb new infections even without a vaccine, but that more money is needed to implement them. Dr. Anthony Fauci, a prominent AIDS researcher in the United States, said, "we want to get to the end of AIDS" but that "a lot of people, a lot of countries, a lot of regions have a lot to do."

Providing better treatment to people who are already infected is critical, Fauci claims, to curb the spreading of the virus to future generations. Male circumcision is a "stunningly successful" start, he adds, referring to a region of Uganda that is pursuing the measures.

"This opportunity will evaporate if we do not act," said Michel Sidibé, chief of the United Nations' UNAIDS. "This opportunity will slip through our fingers, and history will never forgive us."

Last December, President Obama unveiled a plan to divert \$50 million in public health funding toward increasing access to medications at home, including \$35 million to state AIDS programs. While lauding the administration's domestic policies on the issue, the Global AIDS Alliance [contends](#) that the number of dollars being provided is not sufficient:

President Obama introduced the watershed National HIV/AIDS Strategy — a collaborative roadmap for policymakers and private groups to reduce HIV infections, bolster treatment and decrease HIV-related health disparities. But the Administration has severely underfunded AIDS Drug Assistance Programs (ADAP) for the poor, with more than 2,500 people now on waiting lists for medication.

However, while advocates claim more government funding will "solve" the AIDS pandemic, others have indicated that Clinton's goal for an "AIDS-free generation" is unrealistic, especially when considering certain lifestyles that contribute to the viral disease. Dr. Chris Beyrer of Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, for example, said HIV-prevention measures could deliver "real declines" but that the virus could continue spreading in certain stigmatized populations, including homosexuals, drug users, and sex workers.

"Will there continue to be HIV infections? The answer clearly is yes," Beyrer [alleged](#). "The reason is political, social, and human rights related. We have a very long ways to go in thinking about an AIDS-free generation in Ukraine, Kazakhstan" and other regions with grounded epidemics among those populations.

Photo: Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton speaks at the XIX International Aids Conference, July 23, 2012, in Washington: AP Images



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