

U.S. Foreign Policy & Global Health: Addressing Issues of Humanitarian Aid and Political Instability

November 16, 2001, Washington, DC - Over the past century, the public health community has produced remarkable achievements from the development of antibiotics to mass immunization. Yet several developing nations have not reaped the benefit of these successes. This forum reviewed the impact of global health issues, and the debate on how these issues should be approached by U.S. foreign policy. An resurgence of readily treatable conditions such as malaria, diarrhea, measles and acute respiratory infections are claiming millions of lives annually, draining resources for poverty-stricken families and communities. In addition, the HIV/AIDS endemic is increasingly claiming more lives, destroying social fabrics from the community level, and potentially threatening national stabilities. As health conditions in these countries stagnate or worsen, the gap between the developed world and developing nations continues to widen, increasing tension between governments and world leaders. These global health issues are now being discussed within the U.S. foreign policy community as potential threats to the political and economic stability of nations.

Welcome:

Geoffrey D. Dabelko, Director, Environmental Change & Security Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars



Introduction:

Steven Durand, Senior Program Officer, Population Resource Center

Speakers:



Topic: Why Health Is Important to U.S. Foreign Policy

Dr. Jordan S. Kassalow, Adjunct Senior Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations

Topic: New Perspectives, Emerging Initiatives in HIV/AIDS Prevention and Mitigation

Andrew A. Fisher, Director, HIV/AIDS Operations Research Project, Population Council

Topic: Child Survival Needs and U.S. Interests

Dr. Al Bartlett, Senior Advisor for Child Survival, U.S. Agency for International Development

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Dr. Bartlett's Presentation "Child Survival Needs and U.S. Interests"

Dr. Jordan S. Kassalow's Presentation "Why Health Is Important to U.S. Foreign Policy"

Mr. Fischer's Presentation "New Perspectives, Emerging Initiatives in HIV/AIDS Prevention and Mitigation"

Factoids:

"During the 1990s, the nexus between foreign policy and international health became increasingly apparent. Early signs of this connection included a special session of the United Nations Security Council on the issue of HIV/AIDS, huge debt relief packages tied to investment in health, and liberalized trade policies to improve access to drugs."

Dr. Jordan Kassalow, Adjunct Senior Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations

"A study by Ted Robert Gurr, et al., on the causes of state instability in 127 cases over a 40-year period ending in 1996 suggests that infant mortality is a good indicator of the overall quality of life, which correlates strongly with political instability."

National Intelligence Council



"Although there has been progress between 1990 and 1998, the infectious diseases of childhood in poor countries - respiratory infections and diarrheal diseases, along with measles, malaria, and other immunizable diseases like whooping cough - still make up major shares of the global burden of disease."

Al Bartlett, M.D., Senior Advisor for Child Survival, US Agency for International Development