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## **AIDS in the Caribbean and Central America**

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# AIDS in the Caribbean and Central America

## Summary

The AIDS epidemic in the Caribbean and Central America has begun to have negative consequences for economic and social development, and continued increases in infection rates threaten future development prospects. In contrast to other parts of Latin America, the mode of transmission in several Caribbean and Central American countries has been primarily through heterosexual contact, making the disease difficult to contain because it affects the general population. The Caribbean countries with the highest prevalence or infection rates are Haiti, with a rate over 6%, and the Bahamas, with an adult infection rate of 3.5%. Three Caribbean countries — Guyana, the Dominican Republic, and Trinidad and Tobago — have rates between 2-3%, while three others, Suriname, Barbados, and Jamaica, have rates over 1%. In Central America, Belize has the highest prevalence rate of 2.2%, while Honduras, Panama, and Guatemala have prevalence rates of 1% or more.

The response to the AIDS epidemic in the Caribbean and Central America has involved a mix of support by governments in the region, bilateral donors (such as the United States, Canada, and European nations), regional and multilateral organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Many countries in the region have national AIDS programs that are supported through these efforts.

The U.S. Agency for International Development has been the lead U.S. agency fighting the epidemic abroad since 1986. USAID's funding for HIV/AIDS in Central America and the Caribbean region rose from \$11.2 million in FY2000 to \$24.8 million in FY2002. An estimated \$27.8 million will be provided in FY2003, and the FY2004 request is for \$41.2 million. Assistance to the Caribbean for HIV/AIDS is expected to increase because of the inclusion of Guyana and Haiti in the Administration's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief announced in January 2003.

In May 2003, Congress approved the United States Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act of 2003, H.R. 1298 (P.L. 108-25), which authorized \$3 billion per year for FY2003 through FY2008 to fight the three diseases worldwide. The President's initiative and the legislation focus on assisting 12 African countries plus Guyana and Haiti, although the legislation notes that other countries may be designated by the President. Some Members of Congress want to expand the list of Caribbean countries in the legislation. Both the House-passed FY2004-FY2005 Foreign Relations Authorization Act, H.R. 1950 (Section 1818), and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's reported FY2004 Foreign Assistance Authorization Act, S. 1161 (Section 519), have provisions that would add 14 Caribbean countries to those listed in the May 2003 legislation.

This report, which will be updated periodically, examines the characteristics and consequences of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the Caribbean and Central America and the response to the epidemic in the region. For additional information, see CRS Report RS21181, *HIV/AIDS International Programs: Appropriations, FY2002-FY2004*, and CRS Report RL31712, *The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria: Background and Current Issues*.

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# AIDS in the Caribbean and Central America

## Characteristics of the Epidemic in the Region

Although the AIDS epidemic in the broader Latin America and Caribbean region is not as pervasive as in Africa, an estimated 1.94 million people were living with HIV/AIDS in the region in 2002, including 1.5 million in Latin America and 440,000 in the Caribbean.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the adult prevalence rate in several countries in the Caribbean and Central America are among the highest outside of sub-Saharan Africa, with 12 countries in these subregions having adult infection rates of 1% or more (see Table 1).

In terms of sheer numbers, Brazil accounts for about one-third of those living with AIDS in Latin America, but its prevalence rate of 0.7% is low compared to many countries in Central America and the Caribbean. Furthermore, Brazil's active prevention efforts have lowered prevalence among the high risk groups — intravenous drug users and homosexuals — and the government's extensive antiretroviral treatment program has lowered death rates.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, the mode of transmission in several Caribbean and Central American countries has been primarily through heterosexual contact, which makes it difficult to contain the epidemic because it affects the general population.

The Caribbean countries with the highest prevalence or infection rates are Haiti, with a rate over 6%, and the Bahamas, with an infection rate of 3.5%. Three Caribbean countries — Guyana, the Dominican Republic, and Trinidad and Tobago — have rates between 2-3%, while three others, Suriname, Barbados, and Jamaica, have rates over 1%. Haiti and the Dominican Republic, with a combined 380,000 adults and children living with HIV/AIDS, account for about 84% of the infected Caribbean population. USAID notes that Haiti's poverty, conflict, and unstable governance have contributed to the rapid spread of AIDS; in some urban areas, HIV infection rates are almost 10%. In the Dominican Republic, there are indications that the epidemic could be stabilizing; HIV infection rates among pregnant women have stabilized or begun to decline.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the Dominican Republic's adult HIV prevalence rate fell from 2.8% in 1999 to 2.5% in 2001.

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<sup>1</sup> Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the World Health Organization (WHO), *AIDS Epidemic Update*, December 2002, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> UNAIDS, *Report on the Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic 2002*, July 2002.

<sup>3</sup> UNAIDS/WHO. *AIDS Epidemic Update*. December 2002, p 20.

**Table 1. HIV/AIDS in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2001**

Area	Adult Prevalence (%)	Adults/Children Living with HIV/AIDS	AIDS Orphans (0-14)
<b>Caribbean</b>			
Haiti	6.1	250,000	200,000
Bahamas	3.5	6,200	2,900
Guyana	2.7	18,000	4,200
Dominican Rep.	2.5	130,000	33,000
Trinidad & Tobago	2.5	17,000	3,600
Suriname	1.2	3,700	1,700
Barbados	1.2	2,000	— -
Jamaica	1.2	20,000	5,100
Cuba	<.1	3,200	1,000
<b>Central America</b>			
Belize	2.2	2,500	950
Honduras	1.6	57,000	14,000
Panama	1.5	25,000	8,100
Guatemala	1.0	67,000	32,000
El Salvador	0.6	24,000	13,000
Costa Rica	0.6	11,000	3,000
Nicaragua	0.2	5,800	2,000
<b>Mexico</b>	0.3	150,000	27,000
<b>South America</b>			
Argentina	0.7	130,000	25,000
Brazil	0.7	600,000	130,000
Venezuela	0.5	62,000	— -
Peru	0.4	51,000	17,000
Uruguay	0.3	6,300	3,100
Colombia	0.4	140,000	21,000
Ecuador	0.3	20,000	7,200
Chile	0.3	20,000	4,100
Paraguay	0.1*	3,000*	— -
Bolivia	0.1	4,600	1,000

\* 1999 statistics.

**Source:** UNAIDS, *Report on the Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic 2002*, July 2002.

Sex tourism is reportedly a factor contributing to rising HIV infection rates in some Caribbean countries. Officials in Trinidad and Tobago have expressed concern about the growth of sex tourism, the so-called “beach bum” phenomenon, and the link to the spread of AIDS.<sup>4</sup> In Jamaica, the resort town of Montego Bay has the highest HIV infection rates in the country.<sup>5</sup> In the Dominican Republic, AIDS activists are concerned about child prostitution in resort areas and the spread of HIV.<sup>6</sup>

In Central America, Belize (which is considered by many as a Caribbean nation because of its linkages to the region) has the highest prevalence rate of 2.2%, while Honduras, Panama, and Guatemala have prevalence rates of 1% or more. The epidemic in Central America is reportedly fueled by the combination of unequal socioeconomic development and high population mobility; it is concentrated among the poor who migrate in search of work and income.<sup>7</sup> In Honduras, the Garifuna community (descendants of freed black slaves and indigenous Caribs from the Caribbean island of St. Vincent) concentrated in northern coastal communities has been especially hard hit by the epidemic, with an estimated 8-10% of the population infected.<sup>8</sup>

Unprotected heterosexual sex has been the main mode of HIV transmission in most countries in Central America, with the exception of Costa Rica, where homosexual and bisexual sex has accounted for some 60% of the transmission of HIV.<sup>9</sup> According to UNAIDS, a major factor in the increasing feminization of the epidemic in Latin America and the Caribbean is that sexual identities are more fluid, with widespread, but often hidden, bisexual behavior among men.<sup>10</sup> A World Bank study maintains that the epidemic in Central America is concentrated in several high-risk populations: men who have sex with men, commercial sex workers, prisoners, and in Honduras, the Garifuna population.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> “Sex Tourism Cause of HIV Spread, Says T&T Minister,” *The Weekly Gleaner* (Jamaica), February 19, 2003. The commercial sex industry linked to tourism reportedly is well established in the Caribbean, with increasing male prostitution by so-called “beach boys.” See: “The Caribbean Regional Strategic Framework for HIV/AIDS,” Pan Caribbean Partnership on HIV/AIDS and CARICOM, March 2002, p. 7. Also see: Annan Boodram, “The Beach Bum Phenomena,” *Caribbean Voice*, August 3, 2002, and Julie Bindel, “The Price of a Holiday Fling,” *Guardian* (London), July 5, 2003.

<sup>5</sup> “Rising Rate of AIDS in the Caribbean,” *All Things Considered*, National Public Radio, July 2, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> “AIDS Activists Worried Over Child Prostitution in Dominican Republic,” *Boston Haitian Reporter*, January 31, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> UNAIDS/WHO. *AIDS Epidemic Update*. December 2002, p 21.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Dr. Angel Coca, USAID Mission, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, November 27, 2001.

<sup>9</sup> UNAIDS/WHO, *Epidemiological Fact Sheets on HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections*, Costa Rica, 2002 Update, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> UNAIDS/WHO. *AIDS Epidemic Update*. December 2002, p 22.

<sup>11</sup> World Bank, “HIV/AIDS in Central America: An Overview of the Epidemic and Priorities (continued...)”

## Consequences of the Epidemic

The AIDS epidemic in the Caribbean and Central America has begun to have negative consequences for economic and social development in the region. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) maintains that the AIDS epidemic threatens to undo many of the health gains made in Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>12</sup> Life expectancy and infant mortality have already been affected in some countries. In Haiti, life expectancy is almost 6 years lower than it would be without the epidemic, and in the Bahamas and Guyana, the number of deaths among 15-34 year olds is two and one half times higher because of the epidemic.<sup>13</sup> As the epidemic continues, already-strained health systems will be further burdened with new cases of AIDS. As a result of the epidemic, there are some 250,000 AIDS orphans in the Caribbean (with 200,000 of those in Haiti) and some 73,000 AIDS orphans in Central America (see Table 1).

According to the World Bank, continued increases in HIV prevalence in the Caribbean will negatively affect economic growth. The epidemic, according to the Bank, will have a negative impact on such economic sectors as agriculture, tourism, lumber production, finance, and trade because of lost productivity of economically active adults with the disease. In particular, the labor market in the region will be dealt a shock because of deaths from AIDS. The Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis, Denzil Douglas, maintains that the epidemic threatens to cripple the labor force just as the region needs to become more competitive in world markets amid the momentum toward hemispheric free trade.<sup>14</sup> Looking ahead, the World Bank warned in 2001 that “what happened in Africa in less than two decades could now happen in the Caribbean if action is not taken while the epidemic is in the early stages.”<sup>15</sup>

The U.S. government views the AIDS epidemic not only as a humanitarian crisis, but also as a national security issue because of its negative impact on economic development and political stability abroad. In February 2002, State Department Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky warned that the disease was spreading in regions close to home, particularly Central America and the Caribbean.<sup>16</sup> In June 2002, Scott Evertz, then Director of the White House Office of

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<sup>11</sup> (...continued)  
for Prevention,” October 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Pan American Health Organization, “AIDS Threatens to Undo Health Gains,” September 7, 2001.

<sup>13</sup> UNAIDS, *Latin America and the Caribbean Fact Sheet*, July 2002.

<sup>14</sup> “Caribbean Leaders Call AIDS ‘Single Biggest Threat’ to Development, Announce Push for Low-Cost Antiretrovirals”, *Kaiser Daily HIV/AIDS Report*, July 8, 2003

<sup>15</sup> World Bank, *HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean: Issues and Options*, March 2001, p.xii.

<sup>16</sup> Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Testimony by Paula Dobriansky, February 13, 2002, Federal Document Clearing House.

AIDS Policy, reportedly warned that AIDS problems abroad could jeopardize the health of Americans, and described the Caribbean as “our third border.”<sup>17</sup>

## Response to the Epidemic

The response to the AIDS epidemic in the Caribbean and Central America has involved a mix of support by governments in the region, bilateral donors (such as the United States, Canada, and European nations), regional and multilateral organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Many countries in the region have national AIDS programs that are supported through these bilateral, regional, and multilateral programs.<sup>18</sup> The World Bank has provided significant support to combat AIDS in Latin America and the Caribbean, with Brazil becoming the first country in the region to receive such assistance. In June 2001, the Bank approved a \$155 million lending program for the Caribbean to help countries finance their national HIV/AIDS prevention and control projects. To date under this program, the Bank has approved loans to Barbados, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Grenada, St. Kitts & Nevis, and Trinidad & Tobago. The Inter-American Development Bank has supported HIV/AIDS activities in such countries as Honduras, the Bahamas, Jamaica, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, and its assistance to support health infrastructure in the region has been important for HIV/AIDS treatment and care programs.

The newly established Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria has begun funding programs in Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, and Nicaragua and will be funding additional projects in Belize, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Guyana, and Jamaica, as well as regional programs for the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).<sup>19</sup> (For more on the Global Fund, see CRS Report RL31712, *The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria: Background and Current Issues*.)

Looking broadly at the entire Latin American and Caribbean region, the commitment to stem the epidemic has grown considerably, and the region has made progress in the treatment and care of people infected with HIV/AIDS. Nevertheless, the quality and scope of surveillance, prevention, and treatment programs in the region vary because of unequal socioeconomic development and high population mobility.<sup>20</sup> Access to antiretroviral drugs has improved significantly in some countries, while in other countries these drugs are almost nonexistent. Brazil, Argentina, Costa Rica, Cuba, and Uruguay provide free public access to these drugs,

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<sup>17</sup> William Gibson, “AIDS Crisis Spurs U.S. Into Action; Disease Damaging World Economies, Leaders Determine.” *Sun-Sentinel*, June 23, 2002.

<sup>18</sup> For a listing, see Pan Caribbean Partnership Against HIV-AIDS and CARICOM. “Matrix: Activities of Agencies in HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean Region,” Guyana, March 2003. The matrix provides information on bilateral, regional, and multilateral HIV/AIDS programs in the Caribbean and originally was prepared by UNAIDS in 2000.

<sup>19</sup> See the Global Fund’s website at [<http://www.globalfundatm.org/>].

<sup>20</sup> UNAIDS and WHO, *AIDS Epidemic Update*, December 2002, pp. 19-21.

while Central America nations completed negotiations with five drug companies in February 2002 to cut the price of antiretrovirals by more than half.<sup>21</sup> In the Caribbean, Barbados is planning for universal treatment and becoming an example for the rest of the region.<sup>22</sup> In Haiti, Partners in Health, a non-profit organization affiliated with the Harvard Medical School, runs a health center in an impoverished rural village where AIDS patients receive advanced medical treatment. The project demonstrates that even in severely impoverished countries with little health infrastructure, there can be sustained treatment for people with AIDS. Funding from the Global Fund will allow Haiti to expand programs for the care and treatment of HIV/AIDS patients.

Regional and multilateral institutions in the Caribbean support a regional approach in dealing with the epidemic in part because governments are either too small or too poor to respond adequately. The minimal infrastructure, weak institutional capacity and poverty have hampered efforts to respond to the epidemic in several countries. In order to overcome these difficulties, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has coordinated a regional approach to combat AIDS. In 1998, the CARICOM Secretariat chaired a Caribbean Task Force on HIV/AIDS that developed a strategic plan for the region. In February 2001, CARICOM launched the Pan Caribbean Partnership Against HIV/AIDS, a new coalition established to involve government, business, and the international community in support of the strategic plan to combat AIDS. In 2002, CARICOM and the Partnership developed a 2002-2006 strategic framework and a plan of action to respond to the epidemic. The Pan American Health Organization and its Caribbean Epidemiology Center (CAREC) have provided technical assistance to help implement the strategic plan, and donors have included UNAIDS and the World Bank and bilateral donors such as the United States.

In Central America, there have been several notable regional efforts, including an initiative to protect vulnerable populations from the epidemic. Various regional meetings have brought together government officials and non-governmental organizations. As noted above, Central American nations were also successful in negotiating significant price cuts with drug companies for antiretroviral drugs.

Although there have been significant efforts to combat the epidemic in the Caribbean and Central America, the challenges ahead are considerable since the epidemic continues to grow. HIV prevalence in Latin America and the Caribbean is expected to continue to grow through 2010, although no country is expected to exceed 10%.<sup>23</sup> Overall challenges in the region include continued surveillance of the epidemic, an increase in prevention programs that also focus on marginalized populations that have been overlooked by past efforts to promote safe behavior, and

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p.21; Pan American Health Organization, "Prices of AIDS Drugs in Central America Cut More Than Half," Press Release, February 7, 2003.

<sup>22</sup> Peter Piot, Executive Director, UNAIDS, Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, February 13, 2002

<sup>23</sup> USAID, *Leading the Way: USAID Responds to HIV/AIDS, 1997-2000*, September 2001, p. 87.

an expansion of therapy to those in greatest need.<sup>24</sup> In the Caribbean, the World Bank maintains that concerted action by national governments and regional agencies, in partnership with NGOs and the private sector, and with the assistance of the international community, will help diminish the adverse impact of AIDS. According to the Bank, prevention campaigns need to focus on changing risky behavior; making HIV-testing and condoms more accessible; treating sexually transmitted diseases; and reducing mother-to-child transmission. Moreover, the Bank maintains that care and treatment, which is negligible in most countries in the region, needs to be developed and expanded to serve entire national populations.<sup>25</sup>

## U.S. Policy

Within the federal government, overall U.S. support to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Latin America and the Caribbean is provided through programs administered by several U.S. agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Department of Labor, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Most funding for such programs is included in annual appropriations measures for Foreign Operations and for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education. (For more, see CRS Report RS21181, *HIV/AIDS International Programs: Appropriations, FY2002-FY2004*.) In addition to support provided by U.S. agencies, the United States also provides contributions to multilateral efforts to combat AIDS, such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria described above. The United States is also a major financial contributor to such multilateral institutions as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank that fund HIV/AIDS projects in the region.

The U.S. Agency for International Development has been the lead U.S. agency fighting the epidemic abroad since 1986, including in Latin America and the Caribbean where it has funded a variety of regional and bilateral programs to combat AIDS. USAID's funding for HIV/AIDS in Central America and the Caribbean region rose from \$11.2 million in FY2000 to \$24.8 million in FY2002. An estimated \$27.8 million will be provided in FY2003, and the FY2004 request is for \$41.2 million (see Table 2).

As part of its Caribbean regional program, USAID has initiated a program focusing on the smaller Caribbean countries that do not have a permanent USAID presence. The program, implemented through NGOs, governments, CARICOM, and CAREC, is aimed at expanding education and prevention programs and improving the effectiveness of health delivery programs. In the Dominican Republic and Haiti, USAID has provided support for education and prevention activities aimed at high risk groups, people living with HIV/AIDS, programs to prevent mother-to-child transmission, and the marketing of condoms. In Jamaica, USAID provides assistance to the Ministry of Health in support of a strategic plan to combat the epidemic. In

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<sup>24</sup> Pan American Health Organization, *HIV and AIDS in the Americas: An Epidemic with Many Faces*, 2001, p. 45.

<sup>25</sup> World Bank, *HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean: Issues and Options*, pp. xiv, xvii, and 35-38.

Guyana, USAID supports a peer education network, a condom program, and assistance to the National AIDS Program Secretariat.

USAID's Central America regional program is involved in prevention activities focused on high-risk groups and mobile populations that cross borders, support for improved public HIV/AIDS programs, and support for comprehensive care for people living with HIV/AIDS. In Honduras, USAID supports both the public and private sector, including support to local NGOs working with populations that have high rates of HIV prevalence, support for the promotion and marketing of condoms. In El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, USAID supports HIV prevention among high-risk populations.

**Table 2. USAID Funding for HIV/AIDS in  
Central America and the Caribbean, FY2000-FY2004**  
(U.S. \$ millions)

Country	FY2000	FY2001	FY2002	FY2003 (Request)	FY2004 (Request)
Dominican Rep.	2.3	3.3	4.0	5.0	6.5
El Salvador	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.6
Guatemala	—	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.6
Guyana	0.2	0.8	1.0	1.0	2.0
Haiti	1.5	4.4	4.0	4.0	8.0
Honduras	1.4	2.6	3.5	4.9	7.0
Jamaica	1.8	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.6
Nicaragua	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.6
Central America Program	3.2	3.7	4.0	4.7	7.6
Caribbean Regional Prog.	—	1.5	5.5	5.4	6.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>11.2</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>24.8</b>	<b>27.8</b>	<b>41.2</b>

Source: U.S. Agency for International Development.

The CDC's Global AIDS Program (GAP) (under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) also has collaborative agreements with developing countries that help support research and formulate preventative and care efforts. It is involved in three program elements: primary prevention; surveillance and infrastructure development; and care, support, and treatment. To date in the Caribbean, the CDC has funded programs in Haiti, Guyana, and a Caribbean regional program supporting

the Caribbean Epidemiology Center (CAREC) based in Trinidad and Tobago.<sup>26</sup> CDC Caribbean funding for FY2002 amounted to an estimated \$5.5 million, with \$1.2 million for Guyana, \$1.2 million for Haiti, and \$3.1 million for CAREC. For FY2003, CDC funding for the Caribbean amounted to \$6.1 million, with \$2.1 million for Guyana, \$2.2 million for Haiti, and \$1.8 million for CAREC.

NIH has funded international research efforts worldwide focusing on such areas as vaccine research, prevention of disease transmission, research on women and AIDS, prevention and treatment of HIV infection in children, prevention and treatment of opportunistic infections, and capacity building and training of foreign scientists. In the Caribbean and Central America, NIH has funded research studies and/or training programs for most countries in the region.<sup>27</sup>

The Department of Labor funds HIV/AIDS workplace education and prevention projects in Belize, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, and Haiti, and is expected to begin a regional program for several English-speaking Caribbean nations.

U.S. assistance to the Caribbean for HIV/AIDS is expected to increase because of the inclusion of Guyana and Haiti in the Administration's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. In May 2003, Congress approved the United States Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act of 2003, H.R. 1298 (P.L. 108-25), which authorized \$3 billion per year for FY2003 through FY2008 to fight the three diseases worldwide. The President's initiative and the legislation focus on assisting 12 African countries plus Guyana and Haiti, two of the poorest nations in the hemisphere, although the legislation notes that other countries may be designated by the President.

Some Caribbean leaders and Members of Congress want to expand the Caribbean countries that would benefit from the assistance, arguing that high mobility in the region necessitates a regional approach in combating the epidemic.<sup>28</sup> They are concerned that only Haiti and Guyana have been identified as countries to benefit from the Bush Administration's plans for increased assistance to combat HIV/AIDS, and that other Caribbean countries will be overlooked. Caribbean officials maintain that targeting specific countries rather than the entire region could be disastrous given the significant travel among Caribbean islands, as well as the annual visits of millions of American tourists.<sup>29</sup> Other Members note that the

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<sup>26</sup> See the CDC's web site at [<http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/od/gap/>].

<sup>27</sup> National Institutes of Health. "Global AIDS Research Initiative and Strategic Plan." December 2000; The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, "Spending on the HIV/AIDS Epidemic," July 2002.

<sup>28</sup> David Gonzalez, "As AIDS Ravages Caribbean, Governments Confront Denial," *New York Times*, May 18, 2003; Matthew Hay Brown, "Caribbean Asks U.S. to Widen Plan," *Hartford Courant*, June 5, 2003.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Smith, "Islanders Decry AIDS Fund Targeting U.S. Plan Leaves Out Most of Caribbean," *Miami Herald*, June 14, 2003; Also see "The Caribbean Regional Strategic Framework for HIV/AIDS," Pan Caribbean Partnership on HIV/AIDS and CARICOM, March 2002, p. 7.

legislation does not preclude the President from designating additional Caribbean countries.

Both the House-passed FY2004-FY2005 Foreign Relations Authorization Act, H.R. 1950 (Section 1818), and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's reported FY2004 Foreign Assistance Authorization Act, S. 1161 (Section 519), have provisions that would add 14 Caribbean countries to those listed in the May 2003 legislation. The additional countries are Antigua & Barbuda, Barbados, the Bahamas, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago, and the Dominican Republic. The provision in H.R. 1950 was added during July 15, 2003, House consideration of the bill; a Rangel amendment (H.Amdt. 247) adding the language was approved by voice vote. In previous Senate action, during May 16, 2003, consideration of the United States Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act of 2003, H.R. 1298, the Senate had rejected, by a vote of 44-51, an amendment offered by Senator Dodd that would have added the 14 Caribbean countries to the list of 14 African and Caribbean countries listed.

HIV/AIDS has been a public health concern for Latin America due to a remaining prevalence of the disease. In 2018 an estimated 2.2 million people had HIV in Latin America and the Caribbean, making the HIV prevalence rate approximately 0.4% in Latin America. The Caribbean is the second-most affected region in the world in terms of HIV prevalence rates. Based on 2009 data, about 1.0 percent of the adult population is living with the disease, which is higher than any other region except Sub-Saharan Africa. Health in the Central African Republic has been degraded by years of internal conflict and economic turmoil since independence from France in 1960. One sixth of its population is in need of acute medical care. Latin American and Caribbean Epidemiological Network Monitoring the AIDS Pandemic Network. Foro 2000, Latin America and the Caribbean STD/AIDS. Monitoring the AIDS. Pandemic (MAP). Central America a high tide of infection, and still rising. Of all of continental Latin America, the northern countries of Central America appear to be the hardest hit by HIV. However there is considerable diversity even within the isthmus. In Honduras, Guatemala and Belize, the epidemic appears to be heterosexually driven and rising rapidly. In Costa Rica, on the other hand, HIV is concentrated among men who have sex with men, and seems to be contained at rather low levels. Many of the countries in Central America have limited data on HIV prevalence in potential high-risk groups. Latin America is the region in the Americas where Spanish or Portuguese are the main national languages. It includes islands in the Caribbean, a region consisting of islands of the Caribbean Sea, and... Central Intelligence Agency Country Comparison: Population. The world factbook. 2014. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2119rank.html>. Web 22 Feb 2015. Chequer P, Cuchi P, et al. Access to retroviral treatment in Latin American countries and the Caribbean. AIDS. 2002;16(suppl 3):S50-S57. CrossRefPubMedGoogle Scholar. De Boni R, Veloso VG, Grinsztejn B. Epidemiology of HIV in Latin America and the Caribbean. Curr Opin HIV AIDS. 2014;9(2):192-198. CrossRefPubMedGoogle Scholar. Fink V, Shepherd B, et al. Germany and Brazil are collaborating in the fight against AIDS in third countries. GIZ and its Brazilian partners advise national AIDS programmes in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa. There is high demand in many of the Latin American, Caribbean, Asian and African states for Brazilian know-how in fighting AIDS. Germany has supported this South-South cooperation from the beginning and has been implementing trilateral and multilateral cooperation projects with Brazil and other countries for many years to fight HIV/AIDS and strengthen national health systems. All measures are developed jointly with the third countries and are demand driven. 48,767 AIDS cases were reported in Latin America and the Caribbean by the end of 1991. 46.3% of cases were in Brazil, 18.6% in Mexico, 9.8% in Latin Caribbean, 8.4% in the Andean area, 7.0% in the Caribbean, 5.7% in the Central American Isthmus, and 4.3% in the Southern Cone. Compared to figures for 1990, incidence in the Southern Cone increased by 155%, 82% in the Central American Isthmus, 60% in Mexico, 40% in the Andean area, and 25% in Brazil. Incidence may have decreased by 9.7% in the Latin Caribbean and 0.3% in North America. Reporting remains delayed and incomplete for many of these countries. Further, only 50% of AIDS cases in Latin America may actually be reported. Incidence and prevalence data should, therefore, be treated with caution.