Life expectancy in these nations has been reduced by disease to between 22 and 40 years. In several sub-Saharan nations, more than one in four pregnant women is infected with HIV/AIDS, and in many sub-Saharan nations one quarter of all children have already been orphaned by AIDS, 13 million children, the equivalent of all the children enrolled in our public school system.

As leaders of this great Nation, we have a responsibility to take the lead in efforts to overcome this AIDS pandemic. But in order to effectively combat the disease, we must come to a full understanding of two key issues. As Martin Luther King, Sr., said, “[w]e cannot lead where we do not go, and we cannot teach what we do not know.”

First, we must understand what accounts for this devastating and preventive ways to combat this disease on the African continent. Just to name a few: lack of quality health care, poverty, lack of education, armed conflict, lack of jobs, and limited government assistance are all factors.

Second, we must come to an understanding that all sectors and all spheres of society have to be involved as equal partners in combating this crisis. The health sector cannot meet this challenge on its own, nor can one government or one nation.

So it is imperative that we have a collective global effort to increase international AIDS spending in Africa and to improve the health care infrastructure of African countries.

Mr. PAYNE. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 3519, the Marshall Plan Trust Fund Act. I know my colleague, Ms. BARBARA LEE (CA), has worked diligently on this issue for some time now and I am pleased that this House is taken up this issue. Let me also thank the Banking Committee, Congressman Jim Leach (IA), who is responsible for moving this bill through the Committee.

The HIV/AIDS crisis is a transnational threat. It threatens not only our public health but it is also a threat to our National Security. According to the Washington Post, “It has the potential to undo decades of work in building free-market democracies abroad.”

On my visit to South Africa in December of last year, I visited an HIV/AIDS clinic and saw first hand the devastation and preventive ways to combat this virus. In Soweto, South Africa, when the AIDS virus detonates this black township of 3 million in a decade or so, the disease will wipe out about 600,000 people. This is almost six times as many people as the atomic bombs killed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Some estimates predict that more than 25% of the working age population in South Africa will be infected with HIV by the year 2010. The global spread of AIDS is reaching catastrophic numbers.

HIV/AIDS has greatly reduced the life span of the citizens of South African countries. Life expectancy in Botswana has declined from 61 years five years ago to 47 years, and is expected to drop to 41 years between 2000 and 2005. In Zimbabwe 1 out of every 5 adults is affected and is significantly reducing population growth from 3.3%.

More than 33 million are infected and more than 14 million have died. Of this number, more than 16 million people have died from AIDS since the 1980s, 60% of them from sub-Saharan Africa. In 1998, 200,000 people died from armed conflicts on the continent, while AIDS has caused about 2.2 million deaths.

Former Congressman Ronald Dellums, who is now the President of Healthcare International Management Company, has conceived the AIDS Marshall Plan for Africa as a means to bring treatment to those affected with the HIV/AIDS virus. Also, the NAACP introduced a similar measure declaring HIV/AIDS a crisis in Africa.

The Clinton administration has taken the right step to combat this menace in the spread of AIDS. President Clinton recently declared $254 million to prevent the spread of AIDS around the world.

Bristol-Myers, one of the largest pharmaceutical companies, has been reduced by disease to between 22 and 40 years.

In conclusion, let me say that the spread of infectious diseases poses a threat to our own health here in the U.S. We should support the AIDS Marshall Plan and the administration's efforts to rid the world of this deadly disease.

Mr. TOWNS. Madam Speaker, I want to join my colleagues in their support of H.R. 3519, the “World Bank AIDS Marshall Plan Trust Fund Act.” In testimony before the Committee on Government Reform, Sandra Thurman, the Director of the Office of National AIDS Policy, sometimes called the AIDS CZAR said that as of this moment, AIDS has killed 12 million men women and children in Africa. Today and every day, AIDS in Africa buries more than 5,500 men, women and children. And that number is estimated to double in the next few years. AIDS has become the leading cause of death in Africa.

But in order to understand the total dimensions of this tragedy, we not only look at the dead, but we must also look at the living. It is estimated that by the year 2010, 40 million children in Africa will be orphaned by AIDS. These children will have lost their parents, and many will have lost entire families. What will these children do? Who will pay for their education? Where will they get the basic necessities of food, clothing and shelter? Who will teach them right from wrong? Forty million children with no connection to society, no connection to family, the community or each other will grow up to be forty million adults who have no sense of past, present, or future. Forty million people who are without moorings can and will destabilize a country, a region, a continent and a world.

I know that the fate of Africa or Africans may not be a high priority for many here. Many may not care about the AIDS virus or its victims. But I don’t know anyone here who does not care about children. I ask you to do what you can to prevent the predictions of forty million orphans from coming true. Let’s find a way to keep their parents healthy and alive. Let’s find a way to provide medical assistance so that there will be 40 million orphans. The United States can and should be a leader in the fight against this pandemic. We can not be the leader of democracy and turn our backs on these families.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. Biggert). Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California? There was no objection.

Tribute to the Colorado State Legislature

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. McInnis) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. McINNIS. Madam Speaker, as the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. Cummings) knows, I have an hour and I would be happy to yield to the gentleman up to 5 minutes so he could conclude his statement. I think the issue that he is speaking about is very important. I yield up to 5 minutes to the gentleman.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. McInnis) for yielding time.

Second, we must come to an understanding that all sectors and all spheres of society have to be involved as equal partners in combating this crisis. The health sector cannot meet this challenge on its own, nor can one government or one nation.

So it is imperative that we have a collective global effort to increase international AIDS spending in Africa. This collective effort must also make vaccine research and development a priority and secure access to treatment for infected individuals. We must encourage pharmaceutical companies to reduce the percentage of spending on marketing and advertising and instead reduce drug prices and increase expenditures on patient assistance programs.

Passage of H.R. 3519, the World Bank AIDS Marshall Plan Trust Act, would be an important step towards these goals. This legislation calls for the governments of key nations, the private sector, and nongovernmental entities to partner in the creation of a Marshall Fund to eliminate AIDS. The fund would provide $1 billion over 5 years for research, prevention, and treatment.