UNAIDS Head: Economic Crisis Linked to Spread of HIV

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The growing economic crisis and the rising cost of food and energy across the globe may make people more vulnerable to AIDS, according to UNAIDS executive director Peter Piot and reported by kaisernetwork.org/*CQ HealthBeat*.

Speaking at an October 28 event at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Piot said that 100 percent of the cost to provide antiretrovirals to 50,000 HIV-positive people in Rwanda was provided by outside donors such as the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. He added that low-income countries will definitely feel the brunt of the economic crisis in terms of HIV/AIDS treatment, care and support.

Piot estimated that most of these countries will not feel the effects of the crisis "in the next six or 12 months because of commitments that have been made in better times," but he questioned whether it will be possible to continue providing treatment to nearly 1 million people in developing countries over the next few years. "We estimate that even if [funding] continues at the same level, deaths will go up to about 3 million per year by 2011," he said.

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