



## Teacher's Guide Right to be Cured

### Introduction: Global health inequalities

- **What do parents usually do when a child has diarrhea?:** Usually, parents take their children to a pharmacy or hospital and diarrhea can be treated with medicine or simple medical treatment. However, receiving such treatment or getting medicine is not as easy for children living in poor countries. About 800,000 children die from diarrhea every year due to lack of timely medical treatment.
- **Ninety percent of people who contract diseases live in poor countries:** Ninety percent of people who contract diseases live in poor African and South Asian countries. However, health care resources available in these countries account for only 10 percent of the world's resources. In African and South Asian countries, 15,000 infants die every day from preventable diseases due to lack of proper treatment.

Global health inequalities



• What do parents usually do when a child has diarrhea?

• 90% of people who contract diseases live in poor countries

### Introduction: Global health inequalities

- **Worsening health inequalities due to COVID-19:** As of December 2020, COVID-19 death toll was about 1.8 million. Although the entire world has been hit hard by COVID-19, the impact on those with lower socioeconomic status is even more serious. They are more likely to live under poor conditions without essential medical facilities and are more often exposed to being infected due to lack of information and awareness about disease prevention. Furthermore, 12,000 people around the world are on the verge of starvation every day unable to receive international relief supplies due to transportation restrictions following international quarantine measures.

Global health inequalities

• Worsening health inequalities due to COVID-19



## 1. What does health inequality mean?

- Health inequality refers to differences in health that arise from different social and economic positions such as income level, occupation, wealth, and education level.
- **The current health level is the highest in human history:** The global life expectancy is increasing as nutrition improves and medical technology develops. Increase in life expectancy, decrease in mortality from infectious diseases, and increase in immunity and other measures show that the status of global health is better than ever before and that healthcare services of the best quality are available.
- **3.6 million people die annually from a lack of treatment:** To prevent and treat diseases, timely vaccinations, diagnoses and treatments are needed as well as proper nutrition and hygienic environments. However, there are still many people in the global community who are ill but not treated because the essential conditions for preventing and treating diseases are not equally distributed across individuals, communities, and countries. About 3.6 million people die every year due to lack of access to affordable medical services.



## 2. Global health inequality is worsening.

- **Measures of public health:** The most widely used indicators to assess the quality of public health are infant mortality rate (the number of infant deaths within a year of birth per 1000 live births) and maternal mortality ratio (the number of women dying from complications from pregnancy or childbirth per 100,000 live births). As a country's economy grows and its healthcare infrastructure improves, infant mortality and maternal mortality decrease. State-run hygiene improvement projects, quarantine projects, vaccination projects, as well as neonatal infection control systems, prenatal care for pregnant women, and maternal health education greatly reduce the death rate of children and women and directly affect the development of a country's public health.
- **Infant and maternal mortalities are highest in Africa and South Asia:** In underdeveloped countries of Africa and



South Asia, children and women’s health remain a blind spot. The main causes of infant mortality are preventable infections and endemic diseases, and the main causes of maternal mortality are poor prenatal management, lack of delivery facilities, and infection during labor among others.

## 2. Global health inequality is worsening.

- **Global average life expectancy:** Over the past 100 years, human life expectancy has increased significantly. The average life expectancy in 2020 for the world was 73.2 years. For most of the developed countries, it was over 80 years. With the development of medical technology and improvement in public health environment, some countries even expect the average life expectancy to reach 100 years. The steady decline in infant mortality and maternal mortality played a major role in increasing life expectancy.
- **Average life expectancy in underdeveloped countries:** As of 2020, the average life expectancy in underdeveloped countries is between 50 and 60. This is because infant mortality and maternal mortality rates are still high in underdeveloped countries in Africa and South Asia. Many children in these regions die from endemic diseases such as typhus, malaria, and dengue fever, and highly contagious diseases such as polio, pneumonia, cholera, and measles.



## 2. Global health inequality is worsening.

- Global maternal mortality ratio was 2.1 maternal deaths per 1000 live births in 2010. (United Nations).
- Africa’s maternal mortality ratio was 4.8 maternal deaths per 1000 live births in 2010. Ninety-nine percent of the world’s maternal deaths occur in developing countries, with 87% occurring in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. In underdeveloped countries, pregnancy and childbirth often proceed without the help of professionals. Combined with economic poverty, malnutrition, regional isolation, and dangerous birth traditions, the maternal death ratios of these countries are high. The top 10 countries with the highest maternal mortality ratios in the world are South Sudan, Chad, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Central African



Republic, Somalia, Mauritania, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, and Afghanistan.

- Global under-5 mortality rate per 1000 live births in 2016 was 41 (United Nations).
- Africa's under-5 mortality rate per 1000 live births in 2016 was 79. Forty-two percent of the world's under-5 deaths occur in sub-Saharan Africa. More than two-thirds of the children died from diseases that could be prevented with simple vaccination and treatment. Pneumonia, diarrhea, birth asphyxia, and malaria are the main causes. Somalia had the highest mortality rate for children under the age of five in the world in 2016, at 133 deaths per 1,000 live births.

### 3. Why does health inequality exist?

- **Lack of national healthcare infrastructure:** Countries in Africa and South Asia are struggling to diagnose and treat diseases due to lack of medical staff, facilities, and medicine. In addition, lack of national vaccination projects and healthcare projects make disease prevention challenging. Malaria, typhoid, cholera, dengue fever, polio, and measles are diseases that can be prevented by timely vaccination and proper sanitation. However, they remain fatal in underdeveloped countries.
- **Difficulty in receiving treatment due to poverty:** Without money, a person cannot go to the hospital or buy medicine even if he or she is sick. About 800 million people in the world spend more than 10 percent of their household income on medical expenses, and 100 million of them live in extreme poverty. For these 100 million people, after their medical expenses, they only have \$1.90 a day (as of 2018) to survive on.
- **Lack of disease awareness:** It is difficult for poor people in underdeveloped countries to receive proper education, which leads to a lack of awareness of health, hygiene, and medical care. These people often neglect personal health and miss the proper timing of receiving medical treatment due to poor concepts of hygiene, blind faith in traditional medical beliefs, and poor understanding of diseases, prevention, and treatment methods.



#### 4. What are the major diseases that contribute to health inequality?

- **Pneumonia (2.65 million deaths per year):** Pneumonia, a very common disease, is the inflammation of the lungs accompanied by symptoms such as coughing, phlegm, chills, and fever. Although it can be prevented with vaccination, 2.56 million people around the world died of pneumonia in 2017, due to lack of vaccination, diagnosis, and treatment. One third of the deaths were of children under the age of five.
- **Tuberculosis (1.5 million deaths per year):** Although tuberculosis (TB) is a disease that has disappeared from many developed countries, outbreaks still occur in developing and underdeveloped countries. TB bacteria usually attack the lungs but can also attack kidneys, nerves, and bones. Without proper diagnosis and treatment, TB can lead to death. In 2018, around 10 million people worldwide contracted TB and 1.5 million people died from it.
- **AIDS (690,000 deaths per year):** AIDS is one of the most serious public health issues in the world today. It is an infectious disease caused by HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), a pathogen that attacks and damages the human immune system that can ultimately lead to death. It is most seriously widespread in underdeveloped countries, with more than two-thirds of all infected people living in sub-Saharan Africa. Of that population, children account for about 5%. AIDS is the number one cause of death for adolescents aged 10-19 in Africa and the second cause of death for adolescents worldwide.
- **Malaria (400,000 deaths per year):** Malaria, an infectious disease transmitted by mosquitoes, is an endemic disease that is widely spread across the African continent, with more than 10% of infected people dying. In 2019, there were about 229 million cases of malaria and 409,000 deaths from malaria. Children under the age of 5 accounted for the largest proportion of deaths. Malaria is preventable through insecticide-treated mosquito nets and malaria vaccinations, and even if a person is infected, it can be cured through drug treatment for 15 days if it is diagnosed early on. However, mosquito nets, malaria vaccines and antimalarial drugs are too expensive for people living in Africa. The price



of antimalarial drug is about \$20, which is far too high for people living on \$1 a day on average.

## 5. Global goal for the right to be cured

- **UN Sustainable Development Goal 3:** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- + The Sustainable Development Goals are 17 global goals for humanity that were set in 2015, by the United Nations General Assembly to be achieved by the year 2030, “to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.”
- Targets to reach by 2030
  - ① Reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births.
  - ② End preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births.
  - ③ End the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases.
  - ④ Reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.



## 6. How can health inequality be reduced?

- **Vaccination, greatest effect at the lowest cost:** Vaccination is a cost-effective strategy that can achieve the greatest effect at the lowest cost. Since 1990, global vaccination efforts have reduced the number of children paralyzed by polio by more than 99%, and the global death toll from measles by about 23 million between 2000 and 2018. In particular, vaccinations for infants and pregnant women act as the strongest barrier in protecting children and mothers from diseases. Immunity gained through vaccines provide great help in the growth and development of fetuses and infants.
- **Deaths from vaccine-preventable diseases:** Measles,



diphtheria, tetanus, vitiligo, and polio are common diseases in children under the age of five and account for about 40% of their deaths. Unfortunately, many children still die from these preventable diseases.

- **Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (GAVI):** GAVI was established in 2000 to improve children's health in poor countries by expanding the supply of vaccines and developing new vaccines. It supports 49 of the poorest countries with a per capita income of less than \$1,580 in 2015.

## 7. How is the international community promoting the right to be cured?

- **Strengthening basic health systems:** International organizations such as the World Health Organization and UNICEF work with governments to operate and support programs that provide education, training, and information related to disease prevention and hygiene improvement for households and communities. Such organizations provide technology, strategy, etc. to governments and provide necessary medical equipment and train public health personnel. They provide basic health services mainly to underdeveloped countries where health services are not available due to lack of essential medical facilities.
- **Support for neonatal health:** Around 7,000 newborns die every day worldwide. Lack of awareness of unsanitary environment and lack of essential medical services are the biggest causes of newborn deaths in underdeveloped countries. To address these issues, international organizations, governments and related agencies work together to implement programs that provide vaccinations and nutrition, and help prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV and other infectious diseases.
- **Support for maternal health:** Around 830 women worldwide die from pregnancy and childbirth related complications every day. The death of mothers due to pregnancy and childbirth can be sufficiently prevented by proper medical support, systematic prepartum and postpartum care, and provision of pregnancy and childbirth related information. International organizations and governments are carrying out health and medical projects to help mothers and newborns around the world to be



able to receive professional help during childbirth and have access to clean water, proper nutrition, basic medical services and vaccines.

## 8. Efforts for the right to be cured: Campaigns

- Christmas seal fundraising campaign to eradicate pneumonia (2.56 million deaths per year):** Christmas seals are labels placed on mail around the world every year during Christmas season to raise funds to fight tuberculosis (TB). The fund is used for finding TB patients, TB screening for vulnerable groups, raising awareness, research and development, education and training, and TB management support. The early 20th century saw a high prevalence of TB throughout Europe after the Industrial Revolution in England. Christmas seals were introduced in Copenhagen, Denmark, by a postmaster named Einar Holboell who was inspired to sell the Christmas seals to raise funds to save children's lives. The first Christmas seal was issued on December 10, 1904. Afterwards, many countries across the world started issuing them.
- World TB Day to eradicate tuberculosis (1.5 million deaths per year):** March 24 of each year is World TB Day, on which campaigns are held throughout countries to provide accurate information on tuberculosis and its prevention.
- World AIDS Day to eradicate AIDS:** December 1 of every year is World AIDS Day, on which campaigns are held throughout countries to provide accurate information on AIDS and its prevention, and to break prejudices against AIDS and eliminate discrimination. Red ribbons, symbolizing blood and warm heart, are worn to raise awareness and support for people living with HIV/AIDS and show solidarity.
- Malaria mosquito net campaign to eradicate malaria (400,000 deaths per year):** Malaria is a disease that causes more than 200 million infections and 400,000 deaths a year. However, just sleeping inside an insecticide-treated mosquito net can reduce the malaria mortality rate by more than 20 percent. Producing and distributing a single mosquito net requires around 10 dollars, which is a big burden for most African residents. The United Nations and



UNICEF are campaigning to send mosquito nets or raise funds for them.

## 9. Organizations working for the right to be cured

- **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation:** Co-founder of Microsoft Corporation Bill Gates and his wife Melinda Gates founded the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in 2000, to help people in underdeveloped countries who were alienated from disease prevention and medical treatment. The foundation's primary goals are to expand healthcare in underdeveloped countries, reduce poverty, expand educational opportunities and access to information technology. Since its founding, it has donated to the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and the AIDS eradication fund, and has established OneWorld Health, a social enterprise, to develop treatments for endemic disease in underdeveloped countries.
- **Doctors Without Borders:** An international humanitarian medical relief organization founded in 1971, by French doctors and medical journalists, which currently operates 29 offices worldwide. All medical support activities are carried out under the slogan "Without any discrimination based on race, religion, gender, or political orientation." The organization was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1999, for its continued efforts to realize humanitarianism by quickly entering conflict and disaster zones and providing medical relief around the world and raising public awareness about potential humanitarian disasters.



## 10. People working for the right to be cured

- **Gino Strada:** Gino Strada is an Italian surgeon who has been providing emergency medical aid to refugees, war victims and the poor in life-threatening conflict zones around the world for 28 years. In 1989, he joined the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and in 1994, he founded EMERGENCY, an international emergency medical organization to ensure the right of war victims and the poor to receive medical treatment contributing greatly to saving the lives of those who otherwise would not have been able to receive treatment. In recognition for his



contributions, he received the Sunhak Peace Prize in 2017.

- “Human rights is an equal authority of every living human being. It cannot be divided into grades A, B, and C according to the gap between the rich and the poor.”
  - **EMERGENCY:** EMERGENCY is an emergency medical relief organization founded in 1994 by Gino Strada to promote the right of the poor and powerless people around the world to receive medical treatment. It currently operates more than 60 emergency medical facilities in 17 countries, including 13 countries at war such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Cambodia, and Central African Republic, saving more than 8 million lives over 30 years. In 2008, governments of 11 African countries, which lack proper public health infrastructure, signed an appeal promising human rights-based healthcare that provides free healthcare to its citizens.
- + Three principles of EMERGENCY
- ① **Equality:** Every human being has the right to be cured regardless of economic and social condition, gender, race, language, religion and opinions.
  - ② **Quality:** High quality health systems must be based on community’s needs, up to date with the achievements of medical science.
  - ③ **Free of Charge (Social responsibility):** Governments must have the health and well-being of their citizens as their priority, and allocate adequate human and financial resources. The services provided by health systems and humanitarian projects in the health sector must be accessible to and free of charge for all. / The poor and powerless also have the right to be treated and medical services for them must be accessible and provided free of charge.

## 11. Worsening health inequality in the age of pandemic

- **Infant mortality rate in underdeveloped countries increased in 60 years:** Over the past 30 years, the global community has been working steadily to save children in developing countries, and the number of deaths of children under the age of 5 had fallen from 12.5 million in 1990 to 5.2 million in 2019. However, the COVID-19 outbreak



limited health services in underdeveloped countries and developing countries, putting millions of additional children at risk of dying. The United Nations predicted that the chances of children under the age of 5 dying from preventable diseases in poor countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America will increase by 45% (1.2 million) compared to 2019, due to the collapse of the medical systems as a result of COVID-19.

- **Decrease in daily necessity emergency relief kit due to blockades and quarantine:** As physical movement and transportation have rapidly reduced due to COVID-19 quarantine, interest and support for vulnerable groups in underdeveloped countries are decreasing. Measures such as suspension of medical supplies provision and vaccination projects, restrictions on access to medical facilities due to COVID-19 quarantine are having a fatal impact on people in underdeveloped countries who are fighting various diseases.

## 12. How can we overcome the pandemic?

- **Global solidarity:** COVID-19 quarantine is ongoing at the national level. Quarantine systems are designed and built at the discretion and capability of the nation. However, since the global spread of the virus has brought a global crisis, the solution needs to be carried out under global solidarity. Countries should avoid stockpiling resources and banning exports and instead should cooperate through resource sharing and technology partnerships.
- **Provide vaccines and treatments to the most marginalized people:** COVID-19 is an infectious disease, meaning that it is only possible to eradicate it completely when vaccines and treatments are supplied to everyone in the world, including the most marginalized people in the poorest countries. Therefore, the international community should establish a system that prioritizes the public interest of overcoming COVID-19 rather than the potential profit from vaccines and treatments. As with the case of AIDS, there will need to be something like intellectual property exemption for COVID-19 vaccines and treatments, rather than large pharmaceutical companies having full control, so



that vaccines can be distributed to all humankind.

- **Learn from the AIDS response:** The WTO announced the exemption of intellectual property rights to AIDS drugs in its 2001 Doha Declaration. As a result of the declaration, the price of AIDS drugs, which must be taken once a year, fell from \$10,000 to \$100, and the death toll from AIDS-related diseases, which reached tens of millions in the 1990s, plunged to 690,000 in 2019. The intellectual property exemption alone dramatically improved the issue of deaths from AIDS, which has been plaguing the international community for decades.

### 13. What can we do?

- **(Brainstorming activity:** Lead the students to reflect on the contents of the slide presentation and think about how they can apply what they have learned.)
- Students can share a variety of ideas such as taking interest in vulnerable groups, donating to international organizations or NGOs that help vulnerable groups, participating in global disease prevention campaigns, and sending relief supplies to vulnerable groups.
- Expanding telemedicine and diagnosis using artificial intelligence; increasing investment in clean drinking water, hygiene management, and hand washing; etc.

