

Volume 2: Chapter 13

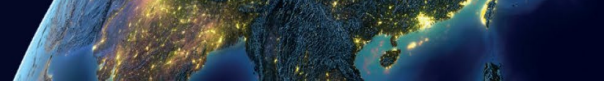
Source 13.2

Jonathan M. Mann on “The Global AIDS Situation” (1987)

Jonathan M. Mann (1947-1998) was a physician from the United States who worked for the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in the 1970s and led early research on AIDS in the 1980s. During the onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the early 1980s, he moved to Zaire and founded SIDA, a collaborative project of scientists from Zaire, the United States, and Belgium to study AIDS in Africa. In 1986, Mann founded the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Programme for AIDS. He resigned from this project in 1990 because of a lack of support from the WHO. He continued to advocate for AIDS research and worked with human rights organizations to create programs that investigated the connection between public health and human rights. This selection is excerpted from an article Mann wrote for World Health, a journal of the WHO published between 1957 and 1998.

When the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) was first recognized in 1981, it appeared that the disease was limited to a single country and to a single risk group. In fact, even in 1981 this was not true. Now, as a result of a series of national and international research efforts during the past several years, the global scope and magnitude of the epidemic of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is much clearer. We now see that the HIV epidemic is an international health problem of extraordinary scope and unprecedented urgency. We also recognise that due to the particular features of HIV infection, the entire range of health sector activities must be aware of and must respond to HIV-related questions and problems ...

Throughout the world, personal and public reaction to AIDS has been considerable. Fears of AIDS and stigmatisation of different groups (homosexual men, haemophiliacs, Africans, Westerners, female prostitutes) have become common phenomena. However, this



remarkable global response has been generated by only 30,000 AIDS cases in the United States, 4,500 cases in Europe, and a relatively few reported cases in many other countries. Individual, family, group and social tragedies are occurring regularly as a result of fears, most often unjustified, of HIV infection and its spread. Throughout the world, tremendous social pressures and tension are being generated by AIDS and AIDS-related concerns. So it must be anticipated that social stresses resulting from the occurrence of 270,000 AIDS cases in the United States by 1991, 25,000 to 30,000 European AIDS cases by late 1988, and increasing worldwide infections may be correspondingly great. Proposed restrictions on HIV-infected workers and international travellers and the unfortunate tendency to blame “others” for HIV suggests some additional international aspects associated with the HIV pandemic. In May 1986, citing "intensive international interest and concern" about AIDS, the 39th World Health Assembly formally approved the creation of an AIDS programme within WHO. In November 1986, the Director-General of WHO announced that, in the same spirit and with the same dedication which characterised WHO's global smallpox eradication programme, WHO was now committed to the more urgent, difficult and complex challenge of global AIDS prevention and control. WHO's Special Programme on AIDS will support the development of strong national AIDS prevention and control programmes, provide international leadership and help ensure global coordination and cooperation.

Source: Jonathan M. Mann, “The global AIDS situation,” *World Health Organization* (June 1987): 6-8.

- This article was published in 1987, one year after the WHO established its Special Programme on AIDS. What does the text reveal about scientific and epidemiological knowledge about AIDS at that time?



- Mann lists several groups that had been stigmatized in connection with AIDS, including homosexual men, hemophiliacs, Africans, Westerners, and female prostitutes. What does this list reveal about how the epidemic was being understood and misunderstood globally in the mid-1980s?