



## Answering the call: assisting Botswana to address long-term technical capacity shortages for HIV/AIDS through public-private partnership

*P.M. Stegman<sup>1,2</sup>, T. Moeti<sup>2</sup>, G. Musuka<sup>2</sup>, I. Chingombe<sup>2</sup>, L. Busang<sup>2</sup>*

**Issues:** In the late 1990s, Botswana faced many challenges. It was one of the countries worst affected by HIV and AIDS, and had been classified as a middle-income country. This latter fact severely limited Botswana's ability to deal effectively with the epidemic as many development partners moved out to focus on other, poorer countries. Faced with perennial human resource constraints, Botswana found itself confronting a worsening epidemic largely alone.

**Description:** In 2000, former President Festus Mogae made an impassioned plea to development partners not to abandon Botswana in its hour of need. A key response to that call came through a unique Public-Private Partnership between the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Merck Company Foundation and the Government of Botswana, known as the African Comprehensive HIV/AIDS Partnerships (ACHAP). As part of its strategy, ACHAP implemented an extensive programme providing critical, diverse and long-term technical inputs to develop national capacities to respond to the epidemic. Since inception, ACHAP has placed hundreds of personnel in key positions across sectors including health, local government, education, and the National AIDS Coordinating Agency, contributing significantly to Botswana's achievement of the Three Ones and the 3 by 5 targets.

**Lessons learned:** The Public-Private Partnership model is an important vehicle for providing significant and flexible human resource inputs consistently over time. ACHAP's long-standing commitment has strategically enhanced Botswana's technical capacity to respond to HIV and AIDS, while helping to shape public policy, develop and implement programmes, and define the strategic direction of the national response.

**Next steps:** As more international partners have heeded Botswana's call, assistance for the national response has grown and enhancing capacity now enjoys wider attention. As ACHAP enters its tenth year, it will begin transitioning out of long-term human resource support, and assist Government to absorb many of the posts created and maximize its strengthened technical competence.

*Abstract no. WEPE0783*