



Nine years of effective support to Botswana's national ARV treatment programme: the case of the African comprehensive HIV/AIDS partnerships (ACHAP), an innovative public private partnership in the fight against HIV and AIDS

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Issues: The late 1990s and early 2000's were likely the worst periods in the history of HIV/AIDS in Botswana. Prevalence among adults aged 25-40 years was above 30 percent. The number of AIDS orphans increased rapidly. Less than 5 percent of the ART-eligible population was enrolled on the national ART programme. Hospital beds were largely occupied by patients with HIV related illnesses. Life expectancy at birth had declined by 13 years, between 1991 and 2003. Severe shortage of skilled manpower to address HIV/AIDS compounded these challenges.

Description: The African Comprehensive HIV/AIDS Partnerships (ACHAP), a Public Private Partnership (PPP) between the Government of Botswana, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Merck Co. Inc/the Merck Company Foundation was set up in 2000, with a budget of US\$100 million to enhance and support Botswana's national HIV and AIDS response through a comprehensive spectrum programme encompassing prevention, treatment, care and support. Between the years 2002 and 2007 with ACHAP's support the Botswana ART programme is estimated to have averted over 50,000 HIV/AIDS deaths[i]. Thirty five infectious disease care clinics were constructed and over 7,000 health workers trained, strengthening the health system through HIV/AIDS support. By October 2009 122,733 patients were on treatment in the national program out of 141 370 (87.4%) of ART-eligible patients on treatment in the country.

Lessons learned: ACHAP demonstrates how PPPs can make a meaningful and lasting contribution to public health challenges, helping to restore hope and transform national programmes. Success depends on building local capacity and achieving buy-in at all levels.

Next steps: Going forward, ACHAP will progressively transition its support on ART to the Government to enable sustainability of the national treatment programme, while increased support is rendered to prevention interventions to help the country to achieve its highly ambitious goal of “Zero new infections by 2016”.

Abstract no. MOPE0399