



## Learnings from Botswana: the Merck/Gates/Botswana Partnership for HIV/AIDS

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**Issues:** Nowhere is the impact of the global HIV/AIDS epidemic more apparent than in the Republic of Botswana. The national HIV adult (aged 15-49) prevalence rate is about 38%... By 2010, life expectancy is projected to decline to 29 years and the number of orphans is expected to grow more than 200%... Botswana led the world in sustained economic performance from 1966-1996..., but HIV/AIDS threatens its socio-economic advances.

**Description:** Merck & Co., Inc. spearheaded a public-private partnership to help confront Botswana's HIV/AIDS epidemic with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Government of Botswana, also known as the African Comprehensive HIV/AIDS Partnerships (ACHAP). Merck and Gates each committed \$50 million, with Merck also donating its two ARVs. The goal of ACHAP is to support the development, implementation and evaluation of a comprehensive HIV/AIDS strategy covering prevention, care, treatment and support.

With ACHAP support Botswana has progressed against HIV/AIDS: National Strategic Framework (2003 – 2009) completed; more than 16,000 patients enrolled in the government's ARV treatment program; more than 1,100 healthcare workers trained; HIV education program reaching more than 500 schools; increased capacity of community organizations to support PLWAs, orphans and families; applied marketing tools in behavior change communications; and providing training in project management, M&E and leadership.

**Lessons Learned:** Addressing health care capacity issues -- human, physical, and systems - is critical to an effective and sustainable comprehensive response. The private sector brings a distinct set of skills and resources that provide unique synergies with traditional public health responses in identifying innovative HIV/AIDS-related initiatives.

**Recommendations:** Collectively, the learnings from Botswana's HIV/AIDS program, particularly through ACHAP support, should serve as a model and may help shape other HIV-related public-private partnerships and funding initiatives worldwide.

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