Integrating the Role of the Private Sector in Scale-up of HIV/AIDS Testing and Counselling to Accelerate Treatment Access and Improve Prevention

The HIV/AIDS pandemic requires a coordinated response across sectors. The private and public sector are natural stakeholders because they employ people who are HIV-positive or have AIDS. Employers can access large networks through employees and their families and communities. Also, as the macroeconomic impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic grows, businesses will increasingly find their ability to develop and prosper in jeopardy. The private sector has access to key resources and skill sets for responding effectively to HIV/AIDS. Public-private partnerships are critical to responding effectively to this deadly epidemic.

The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNAIDS seek to develop a broad partnership with the Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS (GBC) and other public and private partners for the purpose of scaling up access to, and take-up of, HIV testing and counselling and treatment. This partnership would build on existing work with the public sector and mobilize important private sector resources, human, financial and in-kind, by coordinating the experience and local contacts of private partners with the technical expertise of the UN and other public partners to develop country-level coordination strategies and implement sustainable programmes.

Expanding HIV Testing and Counselling: the workplace as entry point

Globally, about 90% of those who are infected with the HIV virus do not know their status. The need to increase the availability and take-up of HIV testing and counselling is great. As part of the 3 by 5 initiative, the WHO is working with partners to massively scale up testing and counselling.

Expanding testing and counselling is not merely a technical solution. It seeks to break through the existing culture of silence around HIV/AIDS and spark dialogue, and make it normal for people to disclose their HIV status. Generating the feeling that “knowing your status” matters is normal will help expand the number of people receiving prevention, treatment and care services, and will begin to reduce the stigma around HIV/AIDS. As HIV testing and counselling are expanded it will be equally important to protect and strengthen the confidentiality around HIV testing in order to guard against individual harm due to HIV-related discrimination.

In the effort to expand HIV testing and counselling, the private sector, as employers, advocates, and community partners can provide leadership in the following areas:

- **Awareness and Community Mobilization**: The organizations of employers and workers mean direct contact to broad local memberships, and links to a range of
community associations. Workplaces have already started ‘Know your status’ campaigns, and provide peer support. Businesses can provide marketing expertise to help generate public awareness of HIV/AIDS and the benefits of knowing one's status, thereby creating demand for HIV testing and counselling, and treatment.

**Products and Distribution:** Coordinating with national priorities, businesses can donate and help distribute such as kits as well as offer their facilities competencies and other products and services to advance comprehensive responses to HIV including awareness, delivery of testing counselling and treatment services and monitoring and evaluation.

**Advocacy:** Business and trade union leaders often have substantial influence at local and national levels. They can leverage relationships with enterprises, government officials, parliamentarians, prominent athletes, musicians and others to promote testing and counselling. This has proven effective in Lesotho, Brazil, and other places.

**Information and Experience Sharing:** The business community can reach millions of people across the world, these networks should be harnessed for the sharing of best practices and other relevant information. Business can support such initiatives through their own links and the provision of resources.

WHO and UNAIDS provide unparalleled technical expertise and substantial political support.

WHO can provide leadership in the following areas:

- **Technical guidance:** Provide technical guidance regarding programming, messaging and targeting of public awareness campaigns.

- **Links with Governments and Communities:** Help businesses leverage their contributions by providing connections to the public sector and create links with national response plans in affected countries.

- **Tracking and Coordination:** With a detailed tracking of HIV and the HIV/AIDS response in countries around the world, WHO, UNAIDS and its cosponsors can guide targeting of interventions such as the donation of testing kits and coordinate national level efforts to maximize contributions from the public and private sectors.

- **Information sharing:** Help facilitate the sharing of best practices, including production of technical guidelines on how business can operationalize provision of testing, counselling and treatment for their employees and communities [I’d put last point under Tech guidance].

**Rationale for Expanded Private Sector Action**

The case for expanded involvement of the private sector and it’s workplace and community partners is strong. Current proposals emphasize the importance of public-private partnerships.¹

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Businesses are natural stakeholders

Businesses need a healthy workforce, strong demand and economic stability in order to prosper. HIV/AIDS threatens business by striking down employees during their most productive years of life, by destabilizing the communities in which they operate, and by weakening economies. HIV/AIDS increases direct and indirect operating costs, deprives enterprises of skilled and experienced workers, and reduces demand for goods and services when consumers become ill, die, or are forced to reduce their work capacity in order to care for others. Business leaders also serve as powerful advocates against HIV/AIDS as pillars of their communities. By speaking out companies can help accelerate their countries response to AIDS and reduce the stigma that has served as a barrier to date.

Businesses possess essential and specialised skills

The private sector has a comparative advantage in essential skills, such as marketing, distribution, management and long-term planning, which will be important to responding to HIV/AIDS and in particular, to the successful scale-up of testing and counselling and treatment.

Maintaining the continuum between employer-worker-community to improve the reach and effectiveness of programs

Employers and workers and the communities in which they operate share a common interest in preserving the health and working life of the labour force, and in many countries work closely together in national bodies such as AIDS committees and at the workplace. It has been found in many settings that the involvement of workers’ representatives in the planning as well as implementation of workplace programmes makes them more relevant, effective and successful – this applies in particular to the take-up of testing and treatment. Company experience in delivering HIV related services can help inform public sector programs.

The public sector is ready to partner with business and labour

There is a growing awareness that public-private partnerships are a critical and hitherto neglected component of HIV strategies. Creating effective mechanisms for business involvement in implementation of HIV/AIDS prevention, testing and treatment programs will help support and enhance current public sector responses to the epidemic. The growing call from the public sector for greater business involvement has resulted in an environment that can support these partnerships, replacing previous attitudes of scepticism about business involvement with an expanded capacity for productive

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Economic Forum's Global Health Initiative in partnership with Harvard School of Public Health and UNAIDS.

David E. Bloom, Lakshmi Reddy Bloom, David Steven and Mark Weston; Prepared for the World Economic Forum's Global Health Initiative in partnership with Harvard School of Public Health and UNAIDS.
engagement. Business can leverage not only its skills but it's networks that facilitate immediate access to large portions of the population.

Concrete Next Steps

WHO and GBC propose the following as possible short-term plans for a partnership. They are illustrative rather than prescriptive, and it is expected that these ideas could be significantly refined and developed.

(1) High-level Experts Meeting in Bangkok (July 10)

The GBC is hosting a high-level meeting of partners including WHO, UNAIDS, national governments, the business sector and community organizations at the XV International AIDS Conference in Bangkok, Thailand. The meeting is planned for Saturday, July 10, from 14:00 - 18:00.

At this meeting, partners will look at awareness, products, distribution, capacity/training, and service provision. Partners will work to develop an implementation strategy and set concrete next steps for scaling up HIV testing and counselling. Key process and outcome measures will be agreed upon to inform the process moving forward. A press conference will be organized and during this time, the partnership can be announced. Throughout Bangkok, opportunities will arise for discussions between WHO, ILO, UNAIDS and business partners on how to strengthen and further develop this concept plan.

(2) Southern Africa Meeting (Fourth quarter 2004)

The partners propose a gathering of key businesses in Southern Africa at the end of the summer to engage the business community in public awareness and mobilisation campaigns. The aim of the meeting would be to develop a concrete plan of action on how to establish scale-up of testing and counselling in specific southern African countries. This meeting will be supported by the GBC’s Johannesburg office, scheduled to open in September 2004.

(3) "Know Your Status" HIV Testing Days (Fourth quarter 2004)

The partners will organize a series of "Know Your Status" days in which opinion leaders in countries are mobilised to publicly go for testing and explain through the media the benefits of early knowledge of HIV status. WHO, UNAIDS, GBC and other partners will help mobilise national leaders, including business and labour leaders. This is a critical step toward generating the momentum and excitement that will encourage people to get tested themselves and reducing the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS.

(3) Integration of GBC Media working group in the initiative

The GBC will link its member companies that are part of the GBC’s media sector working group to advise the partners on advocacy and marketing. With content guidance from WHO, media working group companies can develop highly effective “know your status” campaigns and messaging. Business sector expertise can be
translated to a range of media outlets including print, radio, television as well as other advocacy tools.

(4) Mapping Activities

The partners will work through their existing networks and contacts to improve the information available regarding ongoing activities on HIV/AIDS in private and public sector workplaces, in particular regarding scale-up of testing and counselling and treatment. This will enable the sharing of best practices and the development of a template on the role of the workplace in testing and counselling and treatment and care (see below).

(5) Development of Operational Template on Testing and Counselling, Treatment and Care at the Workplace

WHO and UNAIDS will work with GBC and other new partners to develop a model on how businesses can effectively implement and support HIV testing and counselling programs, and how these can be linked to treatment and care for HIV and AIDS to help expand access to services for the broader community. This model can draw on the results of the mapping activities implemented under item number 4 above, but need not wait for the mapping to be complete, as the urgency of the HIV/AIDS epidemic requires immediate action.

(6) Leveraging Human Resources

The proposed partnership can maximize its impact by making strategic use of personnel. The partners will explore the possibility of secondment of an employee from the private sector to WHO would help further the partnership's work. Similarly, UNAIDS and WHO will explore the possibility of secondment of an employee to the private sector.

(7) Mobilizing partners needed for scale-up

The WHO, UNAIDS and GBC will work to rapidly involve other key partners that can help unlock the power of the business sector against HIV/AIDS and link current and new HIV efforts with networks of their employees and families. As an initial step, this partnership will work to integrate ILO, WEF with clearly defined roles and commitments during the International AIDS Conference in Bangkok.

Country Programs

Successful scale-up of testing and counselling is most likely in countries where ARV treatment is planned or underway. In order to ensure impact, the selection of countries should be based not only upon areas that are heavily affected but also where WHO, ILO, GBC and other partners are positioned for success. For example, this includes areas where the partners have strong contacts, for example the ILO’s constituents, and where resources are available to support activities -- such as countries that are GFATM or PEPFAR recipients. The presence of a strong champion for the program -- such as in Indonesia -- is another factor that can help ensure success. Initiation of programs will need to support comprehensive responses to HIV/AIDS that address the full vertical continuum of HIV interventions. Designation of the countries will be decided during further consultations.