HIV/AIDS Giving

On June 19, 2001, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation committed $100 million to the Global Fund for AIDS and Health. The foundation is making this commitment over a multi-year period for innovative HIV/AIDS prevention efforts.

Stopping the transmission of AIDS is the number one global health priority for the foundation. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s goal is to reduce and ultimately stop HIV transmission, improve access to care for those infected, and improve conditions for children affected by HIV/AIDS. Specifically, the foundation’s HIV/AIDS giving strategy emphasizes the following key priorities:

1. Vaccine Development
2. Prevention/Protection
3. Microbicide Development
4. Comprehensive Approaches
5. AIDS Orphans

The common strand among all of these is simple: each area of focus is dramatically under-funded, yet they all hold the potential of saving many lives. What follows is a brief description of the foundation’s efforts within each of these five priorities and a sample of the grants made.

1. VACCINE DEVELOPMENT

The development of an AIDS vaccine is the most cost-effective way to address the individual and social cost of this disease. In the long-term, it is the only sustainable way to end this pandemic and save millions of lives. Yet the development of vaccines for AIDS and other major causes of death and disability in developing countries, like malaria, and tuberculosis, has been less of a priority to pharmaceutical companies than vaccines with greater “market potential.” What’s more, on average, it takes 10 to 15 years after a new vaccine is available in industrialized countries for it to become available and affordable in developing countries. Each year, three million children die from vaccine-preventable diseases primarily due to lack of vaccine access.

As a result, the foundation’s vaccine strategy takes a two-pronged “push” and “pull” approach. The “push” approach supports the research and development of vaccines against diseases that affect developing countries disproportionately. “Pull” mechanisms involve initiatives that purchase and distribute necessary vaccines for use low-income countries.

In this area, the foundation supports:

**International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI) -- $126.5 million**

IAVI and its partners are committed to speeding the discovery and distribution of a safe, effective and accessible AIDS vaccine. IAVI has taken on many roles including acting as a strong advocate for accelerating the search for vaccine candidates, calling for additional resources, and finding consensus on how to make a vaccine accessible to the entire world.
2. PREVENTION – PROTECTION

Prevention and protection programs work together to identify and create effective and low-cost “tipping points” including education, high-risk outreach and behavior change. Particular efforts are being made to reach and educate those at high risk of infecting others or those becoming infected with HIV including commercial sex workers, people with multiple partners, truck drivers, seasonal workers, adolescents, intravenous (IV) drug users and newborns of HIV-positive mothers.

Behavior change, especially in these high-risk groups, is also a priority. The two most important behavioral measures are encouraging and enabling a higher rate of condom use and providing access to treatment of sexually transmitted diseases and opportunistic infections.

AIDS prevention information and education also have been proven to help reduce transmission rates even where prevalence rates are high. The foundation supports the replication of education programs that have been successful in places such as Uganda, Thailand, Senegal, and the US. The foundation also invests in straightforward and life-saving preventative initiatives including blood screening for AIDS.

In this area, the foundation currently supports:

**Harvard School of Public Health for AIDS Prevention in Nigeria, 2000 -- $25 million**
Currently one in six Nigerians is HIV-positive. Harvard's Program will profile the nature of HIV infection in Nigeria and then target appropriate prevention programs with the goal of keeping infection rates from growing. HSPH has done this successfully for many years in Senegal where infection rates have remained stable at two percent. A second element of the program (performed jointly with colleagues at the Center for International Development at the Kennedy School of Government) will provide training for Nigerian scientists and policy makers in order that they can develop AIDS prevention strategies and build the country's epidemiological and laboratory capacities.

**Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, 2000 -- $15 million**
Some 1,800 babies are newly infected with HIV each day through mother-to-child transmission at birth – 1,700 of them in sub-Saharan Africa alone. By 2002, the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation will provide counseling and testing to 50,000 mothers and treat 10,000 mother/infants.

**United Nations Population Fund, 2000 -- $57 million**
In Botswana and South Africa, UNAIDS reports that half of the young adult population will become infected during their lifetime, thereby decimating the work force, destroying families and leaving children orphaned. In response, the foundation is funding a five-year initiative to expand national campaigns in Botswana, Ghana, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania to educate youth about preventing HIV/AIDS and ensuring they can protect themselves.

**Health Systems Trust to support loveLife Healthy Adolescents HIV/AIDS Campaign, 2000 -- $7 million**
Working with the Kaiser Family as a major partner, this AIDS awareness campaign reaches adolescents in South Africa through innovative media campaigns and teen health centers.
Planned Parenthood, South Africa, 2000 -- $3 million
Youth Centers in South Africa, IPPF and the Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa (PPASA) propose to strengthen and develop youth centers in nine communities in South Africa over a three-year period. The goal of the project is to provide young people with effective sexual and reproductive health education and services, enabling them to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancy and sexual violence.

3. MICROBICIDES DEVELOPMENT

The foundation is supporting often overlooked and under-financed efforts to develop new and effective microbicides to help women protect themselves against HIV/AIDS. It is vital that women have options to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS that do not depend on their partner’s participation.

In this area, the foundation currently supports:

CONRAD, Consortium for Industrial Collaboration in Contraceptive Research, 2000 -- $25 million
CONRAD has several ongoing trials of cellulose sulfate and polystyrene sulfinate - in conjunction with Johnson & Johnson. They also have several other candidates under consideration.

Population Council -- $4.45 million
Population Council is currently running a contraceptive trial in Thailand using special blocking agent composed primarily of a seaweed derivative. This will be the first non-contraceptive microbicide to move into phase three trials.

4. COMPREHENSIVE APPROACHES

The foundation is committed to comprehensive approaches aimed at reducing the spread of HIV and significantly increasing the awareness, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of HIV/AIDS. The ultimate goal is to reap even greater benefits from the combined impact of these multi-faceted initiatives.

In this area, the foundation currently supports:

This program highlights the critical role of partnerships. It seeks to advance significantly HIV/AIDS prevention, screening and counseling, health care access, patient management and treatment of HIV in Botswana, a country where a third of the adult population is HIV-positive. This collaborative program is designed to demonstrate the benefits of both containing the pandemic and demonstrating the possibility of a comprehensive approach to improving the care of people living with HIV in a resource-constrained country. The partnership includes Merck & Co. and the government of Botswana.
5. AIDS ORPHANS

AIDS has orphaned more than 16 million children. Thirteen million of those are under the age of 15, a number that is projected to grow to 40 million. This pandemic has created a generation of young people who will grow into adults without the essential support and structure of a family. In addition, 1.4 million children worldwide under the age of 15 are living with HIV/AIDS.

In this area, the foundation currently supports:

PLAN -- $1 million
The initiative, created by PLAN in partnership with CARE, Save the Children, and the World Conference on Religion and Peace, will result in an unprecedented pan-African effort providing a package of cost-effective and practical interventions including support from local institutions, and community-based organizations. This initiative will provide protection, care and support for children living with, or at risk for, HIV/AIDS.