

INTRODUCTION

The Bank is committed to staying the course in the fight against AIDS

The 40 million people now living with HIV/AIDS, along with the families of the 20 million who have already died, are a stinging indictment of the world's collective failure to forestall a major—and preventable—epidemic. The human, social, and financial costs are incalculable. In many countries, AIDS has reversed the development achievements of the past generation and now jeopardizes the prospects of the next. In some countries in sub-Saharan Africa AIDS has slashed life expectancy by half.¹ It has closed schools and overwhelmed health care services. It has orphaned 15 million children.

And this is only the beginning. More people were infected last year than ever before, and more still will be infected in 2005. If this trend continues, the world will fail to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of halting the spread of HIV by 2015, and other important MDGs also will not be met.²

In recent years, the world has finally come to a firm consensus on the need to respond aggressively to AIDS—to save lives, secure the future, and safeguard societies. Global funding grew twenty-fold between 1996 and 2004. New global institutions have been created. Programs to prevent new infections, provide care and treatment to those already infected, and mitigate the impact of AIDS have proven effective in thousands of small settings.

Yet despite these successes, our collective efforts remain unequal to the task. More money is on the table than ever before, but its promise has yet to be realized. Few countries have programs of sufficient scale; too few programs are evidence-informed or carefully prioritized; too little of the money is reaching those in greatest need; and we

have scant evidence of what approaches work best when scaling up.

The Bank is committed to a long-term response to the pandemic—to staying the course in the fight against AIDS. We must stem the tide of the epidemic, keeping the crucial focus on prevention to protect current and future generations. We must support people who need a lifetime of treatment and care. We must protect and nurture millions of orphans through to adulthood. We must ensure that our collective investments in HIV are undertaken in coordination with investments in health, education, and social protection systems and reinforce rather than undermine them.

As recognized through the Global Task Team process and by the G8 leaders, most recently at Gleneagles, strong productive partnerships with countries, with other funding organizations and with civil society are needed to overcome the formidable challenges of the epidemic. Success will depend on working together to build country ownership and capacity, especially to develop strong strategies, implement them well and monitor and evaluate programs; leverage funds from client countries and the development community; and link the fight against HIV/AIDS to broader efforts to alleviate poverty, reduce gender disparities, increase equity and promote development.

In recent years, the World Bank has dramatically expanded its support for HIV/AIDS programs, and intensified its activities as a cosponsor of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). The Bank's finance, influence, country presence, multi-sector scope, analytic skills, and ability to support effective implementation, provide a

unique capacity to contribute to the global effort against AIDS. The mainstay of the World Bank's work in HIV/AIDS is of course the lending, analysis and policy discussions led by the six regions, and described in their regional strategies and business plans (summarized in Appendix 1). This Program of Action explains (for internal and external audiences) the steps the World Bank will take over the next three years, to strengthen the Bank's response to the epidemic, and to complement and contribute to the work of our partners. These include the lending, analytic work and policy engagement led by the Regions, the actions that the Global HIV/AIDS Program (GHAP) will take to support, facilitate and augment country- and region-specific operational work, additional cross-cutting activities, efforts to integrate AIDS interventions into the work of other key sectors and the International Finance Corporation (IFC), and the capacity-building work of the World Bank Institute (WBI).

Before describing the specific actions (in Part 2), this document reviews how the HIV/AIDS epidemic has evolved, and the persisting and emerging challenges we face in addressing it. The Bank's response to HIV/AIDS so far is summarized as well as the lessons of experience and joint agency and bilateral work to harmonize global and country efforts that have helped guide the choice of priorities for this Program of Action.

Notes

1. UNAIDS. *2004 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic: 4th Global Report*.
2. United Nations 4 April 2005. *Progress Made in the Implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS*, Report of the Secretary-General to the fifty-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly. Agenda item 43. New York.