

Remarks by Ambassador Michelle D. Gavin
Launch of Expanded “See and Treat” Cervical Cancer Screening and Treatment Program
Princess Marina Hospital
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As prepared for delivery

- It is an honor to join you all today to participate in the announcement of an important program that could have a tremendous impact on women’s health in Botswana.
- I am particularly proud to represent the United States Government and to join Former President George W. Bush in this announcement, because his presence here and that of the other Pink Ribbon Red Ribbon partners herald a substantial step forward in the United States’ partnership with the Government of Botswana in meeting the country’s health challenges – in this case, cervical cancer.
- Cervical cancer is a disease that has affected women throughout the world. It affects women in my home country of the United States, and here in Botswana, it is the second most common cancer, and it is the leading cause of cancer-related deaths for women. This is a grave threat to women’s health, and therefore to the health of this remarkable country.
- It is important to highlight that cervical cancer is more common and more aggressive in women who are HIV positive. The World Health Organization projects a greater than 20% increase in cervical cancer incidence and related deaths by 2025, if current trends continue in Botswana.
- But the scaled-up efforts that we are announcing today, and the work of Pink Ribbon Red Ribbon, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Ministry of Health, offer real hope that we can eliminate much of the suffering that this disease can cause.
- The goal of this joint effort in Botswana is simply to reduce illness and death caused by cervical cancer by making it easier to screen and treat for the disease in its pre-cancerous state.
- Today, we are announcing funding of more than 22 million pula, all of it provided by the American people, to expand the See and Treat program, an innovative initiative that allows women to be screened, diagnosed and treated for cervical cancer, in most cases in just one or two visits.
- Ultimately, a dramatic decrease in cervical cancer is possible through the use of the HPV vaccine, but in the shorter-term, a dramatic impact can be made through See and Treat, with screening and treatment in the earliest stages of the cancer’s development.
- As I said, I am very proud to join Former President Bush today, because he is no stranger to working to improve health outcomes in Africa. As most of you know, with the bipartisan support of the U.S. Congress, President Bush spearheaded the implementation of the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief – what we all know well today as PEPFAR.
- Thanks to PEPFAR and the massive support it directed from the American people to assisting people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, the United States, alongside national partners like Botswana, helped to save countless lives around the world, particularly in Africa.
- He is here today to continue that legacy as a partner in Pink Ribbon Red Ribbon initiative.
- Pink Ribbon Red Ribbon will leverage the expertise and resources of a diverse and powerful array of health firms and NGOs to chart a new path in Botswana’s fight against cervical cancer.
- I would like to note that even with the unprecedented three million dollars in support from the United States Government and the clear commitment of partners like those here today with Pink Ribbon Red Ribbon, the prospects for real progress are possible only because of the steadfast dedication, commitment, and expertise that the Government of Botswana has brought to bear.
- The United States and Botswana are strong partners in a wide range of activities – and today we stand together again as partners committed to meet one of this nation’s greatest health challenges.
- Thank you.