

PRESS RELEASE

**U.S. Embassy Demonstrates Commitment to Work Alongside Botswana to Achieve
an AIDS-free Generation**

With World AIDS Day approaching, the United States Embassy is pleased to re-emphasize our commitment to work in partnership with Botswana in achieving an AIDS-free generation through science, dedication, investment, and compassion. We are also pleased to announce that the Embassy will participate in a variety of activities commemorating World AIDS Day on December 1.

We join the people and the Government of Botswana in reflecting on the lives lost to AIDS and we pay tribute to the 34 million people worldwide living with HIV. Since AIDS was identified 30 years ago, the United States has played a leading role in achieving scientific progress, and in translating science into programs. Building on this foundation with scientific advances, we now have the tools that allow us for the first time to set the goal of achieving an AIDS-free generation. To achieve this goal worldwide, the United States is moving forward in three areas. First, with combination prevention, we are supporting a mix of high-impact prevention interventions that together should achieve significant reductions in new HIV infections. Second, we are making smart investments, using available resources more effectively and efficiently, increasing impact and driving down costs to save as many lives as possible, for as long as possible. Third, through shared responsibility, we are building sustainable, country-owned programs by working with partner nations as they increase their own investments and working to encourage other donors to do more, including through the Global Fund.

In Botswana, our engagement follows this model. The U.S. is supporting important new HIV prevention research that will determine the impact and cost-effectiveness of combining prevention interventions such as safe male circumcision, anti-retroviral drug treatment, HIV testing and counseling, and prevention of mother-to-child transmission programs. This research initiative, which is supported by U.S. Government funding of more than BWP140 million, is a collaborative effort among the Governments of Botswana and the United States, and the Botswana Harvard Partnership.

The United States is prepared to increase our investment in another promising area, safe male circumcision. Research indicates this low-cost procedure reduces the risk of male acquisition of HIV by up to 60%. The U.S. is providing extensive support to government and civil society to assist Botswana's nationwide campaign for safe male circumcision, which if it succeeds in its goal of reaching 470,000 males by 2015, will make substantial progress in reducing the spread of HIV.

In addition, the United States is expanding support into research on the connections between HIV and tuberculosis (TB). It is critical to ensure that TB doesn't take the place of HIV/AIDS in threatening this country on a massive scale. The U.S. is working with the Government to better identify cases of TB, to

strengthen infection control between TB patients and HIV-positive patients, and to improve the treatment of TB patients.

In these and other areas, the United States is committed to its partnership with the people and the Government of Botswana to improve health. Our activities employ a variety of U.S. Government agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Peace Corps, USAID, and the Departments of Defense and State, along with funding from the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the National Institutes of Health. Regardless of funding source or implementing agency, all U.S. activities come from the same source - the American people – and all pursue a common vision to work alongside Botswana in improving health.

To celebrate the strong partnership we have in the health area, the U. S. Embassy is participating in a variety of activities commemorating World AIDS Day. Botswana's national theme for World AIDS Day is "Getting to zero: zero new infections, zero discrimination, zero AIDS-related deaths." The U.S. Embassy's theme is "Getting to Zero Together," signifying our strong commitment and partnership with Botswana to achieve an AIDS-free generation together.

The blood supply in Botswana is critically low and HIV negative blood donors are needed to provide lifesaving blood transfusions for sick and injured Botswana around the country. Our World AIDS Day activities include a very successful blood drive in which Ambassador Michelle Gavin and U.S. Mission personnel participated on November 22. We are also supporting a second blood drive on November 29 in Moshupa – the site of the official World AIDS Day event two days later. The Moshupa blood drive will take place at the secondary school from 9:30am to 2:30pm. Pledge 25 will organize "edutainment" activities to encourage more people to donate blood. Safe blood donation encourages donors to stay HIV-negative — so that they can continue to donate and save lives.

We are also supporting a part of the program at the official World AIDS Day event in Moshupa on December 1. In conjunction with the Creative Nation project, Enigma and others will perform an original artistic piece on the theme of "Getting to Zero Together." The Embassy will also host a booth in Moshupa where members of the public will have the opportunity for impromptu performances on the theme of "Getting to Zero Together."

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