

PRESS RELEASE

United States to Fund Research on Combined HIV Prevention Strategies

The United States Embassy is pleased to announce a new project to research the impact and cost-effectiveness of a unique combination of HIV prevention strategies in Botswana. The four-year, BWP 139 million project, funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through the President's Emergency Plan for HIV/AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), will be conducted in collaboration with the Botswana Harvard AIDS Institute Partnership and the Botswana Ministry of Health.

Researchers plan to conduct a randomized study of nearly 50,000 people aged 18 to 49 years old in Botswana. The key focus of the proposed study is to investigate how combining HIV prevention interventions affects the rate of new HIV infections. For study participants, interventions would include increasing coverage of HIV testing and counseling, safe male circumcision and antiretroviral treatment for HIV-positive adults and HIV-positive pregnant women.

In addition, a unique element of the planned study includes focused efforts to prevent HIV transmission among individuals with a high viral load and tracing HIV gene signatures (the genomic fingerprint of a virus) to determine the effectiveness of this approach.

U.S. Ambassador Michelle Gavin said, "The United States' commitment to assisting Botswana to meet its health challenges remains strong, and we have made real headway side-by-side. Much of what we have achieved together is in HIV prevention and treatment, for instance in preventing mother-to-child transmission and in providing ARVs to people that need them. But there is still much work to be done. So, I am particularly pleased that this new U.S.-funded project will look at innovative ways to combine prevention methods to make even greater progress in stopping this disease. Down the road, we will look for more areas where we can add value, particularly in building a more sustainable, home-grown health system."

This project in Botswana is part of a broader US\$45 million initiative that includes HIV prevention and treatment research activities in Zambia, South Africa, and Tanzania.

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