



The Role of the Technology Sector in the Global Response to HIV/AIDS

Executive Summary

Working Session—June 27, 2006



Introduction



After 25 years of the AIDS epidemic, low- and middle-income countries still struggle to cope with the overwhelming task of providing prevention, care and treatment services in resource-challenged settings. This challenge presents a perfect opportunity for the private sector to become more involved in the fight against HIV/AIDS, collaborating with governments that are already providing financing and services to millions in need. In such a public-private partnership, the private sector can contribute much-needed innovation while the public sector shares information about the ever-growing global health community, where funding agencies increasingly demand practical, sustainable systems and information technology infrastructure. Because entry points into this market are not always clear, companies stand to benefit significantly from a better understanding of them, as well as from information about how to protect their own workforce and supply chains and develop markets in, and products for, AIDS-affected regions.



Event Overview

The *Role of the Technology Sector in the Global Response to HIV/AIDS* working session sought to develop practical projects that information technology companies may join to address the global HIV/AIDS pandemic in heavily AIDS-affected countries and emerging markets. The Office of the US Global AIDS Coordinator (OGAC), Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS (GBC), Corporate Council on Africa (CCA) and Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) hosted the session at the OGAC offices in Washington, DC on June 27, 2006. Nine companies and six other organizations involved in international HIV/AIDS work participated in the working session, devising ways to engage the skills, products and expertise of information technology leaders to form public-private partnerships against HIV/AIDS. Constella Futures participated as facilitators for the breakout sessions.

The working session was intended to lay the groundwork for a collaborative initiative that promotes, supports and leverages core competencies, sustainability efforts, corporate social commitments and supplier standards through public-private partnerships. It also provided the convening organizations with valuable knowledge to apply in future projects with the technology sector and beyond, and an opportunity to encourage greater support in the effort to address HIV/AIDS.

Highlights from the Working Session

Global Responses to HIV/AIDS

The fundamental challenge in addressing HIV/AIDS in the global setting is a lack of capacity. Ethiopia, for example, has only 700 trained pharmacists for a population of 75 million. 'Lack of capacity' refers not only to issues of human capacity; but also to system or organizational capacity and capacity for effective communication. Given these challenges, there are several places in which collaboration between technology companies and the public sector would be particularly fruitful, such as developing stronger medical records systems or using telecommunications technologies to better manage adherence to antiretroviral drug therapy.

Private sector companies are an increasingly important component in addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic globally. As in the experience of companies operating in such AIDS-affected countries as South Africa, it has become very clear that not only is addressing HIV/AIDS at a corporate level the "right thing to do" in humanitarian terms, but also in economic ones. Not addressing the epidemic can have devastating results for both company and country, increasing healthcare costs, reducing workforce productivity and market consumption, even destabilizing the entire political climate of particularly hard-hit countries. Once a

company does choose to respond, there are several different ways in which it can do so, from developing comprehensive workplace programs, to using a company's core competencies to close gaps in national HIV/AIDS services, to using corporate giving mechanisms for targeted donations.

Matching Core Competencies to Capacity Challenges in the Fight Against HIV/AIDS

Along with the discussion of opportunities to apply technology to improve organizational capacity and communication, the working session participants also identified several challenges relating to human capacity in resource-challenged settings that they could help to remedy. These challenges included the low number of

medical service providers, the knowledge gap between those providers, and the lack of medical records and longitudinal information needed to evaluate the successes and failings of prevention, care and treatment programs. These challenges are compounded by difficulties in data management capacity, such as the scarcity of trained technology professionals and information management systems. Without this culture of data and information management, implementing technological solutions in resource-challenged environments is a much more highly training-intensive process.

In trying to find solutions for these challenges, the participants in the working session named a wide range of general business competencies that they could help bring to bear on the epidemic: communications,

Information Technology Solutions

Information technology companies have not been absent from efforts to address HIV and AIDS in places like Sub-Saharan Africa. Participants in the Role of the Technology Sector in the Global Response to HIV/AIDS working session shared some specific experiences in using existing technologies to develop critical solutions to the capacity challenges in AIDS-affected environments:

- I-LINX – A satellite communications service provider, I-LINX collaborated with the US Agency for International Development to bring emergency voiceover IP phone service and an Internet connection to a rural community in Mali, West Africa.
- Voxiva – A firm that provides solutions for the health care sector, Voxiva worked with the Ministry of Health in Rwanda to develop TRACnet, an application that collects, organizes and shares data regarding HIV/AIDS care and treatment services.
- Bridges.org – A nongovernmental organization that brings information and communications technology to developing countries, Bridges.org serves as a catalyst for changing the policy discussion surrounding technology in resource-challenged settings and a liaison between policymakers and stakeholders from disadvantaged communities.
- Motorola – A global communications company, Motorola has agreed to donate a portion of the proceeds from one of its most popular phones to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The donation could be as much as \$100 million.



management and skills transfer, human and financial resources, business process reengineering, supply chain management, brand recognition and government relations. Speaking more specifically to the particular skills of the information technology industry, they identified data management and storage, provision of access to information, network creation, clinical information management and data tracking

As was suggested earlier, there is a compelling business case for companies to enter into public-private partnerships that address the challenges posed by fighting HIV/AIDS in resource-challenged settings. Along with avoiding economic loss and political destabilization, such partnerships can broaden and diversify a company's market, create opportunities to be a market leader, provide access to thought leaders, and leverage existing public-private partnerships or collaborations with multinational organizations. Participants identified several challenges to the success of these partnerships, however, including economic

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instability in targeted countries, the difficulty of identifying the value proposition, a limited knowledge of resource-challenged environments, and the fact that goodwill in the U.S. earned by companies entering into such partnerships is very hard to quantify.

There are a number of ways in which organizations like the session's conveners can mitigate these challenges to company involvement; for example, they can encourage transparent business transactions, provide comprehensive data on the business environment in a particular country, provide access to infrastructure and resources already in those countries, give companies access to global leadership and thought leaders, and publicly acknowledge companies that choose to establish public-private partnerships.

The group plans to meet in early October 2006 to identify some actionable ideas with which to begin the collaboration between technology companies and the conveners.

Working Session Conveners

Office of the US Global AIDS Coordinator (OGAC): OGAC is the coordinator for the US HIV/AIDS programs around the world through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). OGAC and PEPFAR implementing agencies will provide programmatic and technical expertise for practical project development and links to in-country resources.

Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR): ICCR is an association of 275 faith-based institutional investors with aggregate assets of \$110 billion. ICCR members engage over 30 companies on their global HIV/AIDS policies. For over 35 years, ICCR has been a leader of the corporate social responsibility movement.

Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS (GBC): GBC is the leading organization mobilizing the resources of the international business community in the fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. With offices in New York, Paris, Johannesburg, Beijing, Geneva and Nairobi, its growing global network includes 220 members, representing a combined workforce of more than 11 million employees in over 200 countries. As the official focal point of the private sector to the Board of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, GBC unites businesses in the fight against these deadly pandemics.

Corporate Council on Africa (CCA): Established in 1993, CCA is a membership organization at the forefront of strengthening and facilitating the commercial relationship between the US and Africa. The CCA HIV/AIDS Initiative works with its members to develop and implement HIV/AIDS workplace policies and prevention, care and treatment programs for their Africa-based employees and family members; increase public-private partnerships to ensure effective HIV/AIDS programs, and enhance private sector participation in national HIV/AIDS efforts in Africa.

Working Session Facilitator

Constella Futures: Constella Futures, formerly Futures Group, is the international development unit of Constella Group. Specializing in the design and implementation of public health and social programs for developing countries, the unit has implemented projects in more than 100 countries. Constella Futures works with government agencies, foundations, corporations, and nongovernmental organizations, to address conditions that compromise the well-being of people around the world.

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Photo credits:

- (1) A Buganda widow looks straight into the camera after having introduced a team of government officials to her surviving family: one co-wife and 18 children. HIV continues to orphan and widow rural Ugandans while local Community Development Workers do their best to link them to essential services. © 2005 Carol Boender, Courtesy of Photoshare
- (2) Young people in Burula, Kenya study the HIV/AIDS prevention messages by computer. WIRED's Community Health Information Centers reached nearly 200,000 young Kenyans in 2003. © 2003 Gary Selnow, Courtesy of Photoshare
- (3) A woman sells red ribbons along Chacha Cha road in Lusaka, Zambia, promoting a campaign to fight stigmatization of HIV/AIDS. "If you are not infected, then you are affected," is a common slogan for HIV/AIDS. © 2004 Abel Mambwe Chibu, Courtesy of Photoshare.
- (4) Children gather during a BRIDGE project field visit to a village in a remote area of Kasungu, Malawi, one of the districts where BRIDGE is implementing the Nditha! ("I Can!") campaign to foster an environment of openness and support in the prevention of HIV/AIDS. © 2006 Jane Brown/CCP, Courtesy of Photoshare.
- (5) Traditional healers examine scientific information at WIRED's Community Health Information Center in Kijado, Kenya. The Centers reaches hundreds of traditional healers and birth attendants and nearly half a million other people each year. © 2003 Gary Selnow, Courtesy of Photoshare.
- (6) Information about HIV/AIDS travels by any means in Oyugis, Kenya. © 2005 Peter Verbiscar-Brown, Courtesy of Photoshare.