Support for HIV and AIDS
Capacity Building and Advocacy
Improving access to HIV and AIDS treatment requires more than simply making our medicines available and affordable. The most important factors for long-term sustainability are strengthening health care infrastructure, ensuring adequate financing for health, and helping to build local health care capacity through training and support. Merck & Co., Inc. supports a wide range of initiatives around the world to help address the impact of HIV and AIDS in a variety of resource-scarce settings. The programs highlighted here represent an example of our global commitment to addressing the challenge of HIV and AIDS.

UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSION FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR)

UNHCR has partnered with the Malawian Red Cross to provide health and HIV activities in the Dzaleka refugee camp in Malawi. The camp serves as a transit country for many refugees fleeing from the Great Lakes region. UNHCR works with the refugee committee on HIV/AIDS at Dzaleka, called DAHACO. With financial support from Merck & Co., Inc., DAHACO has been able to strengthen activities, mainly in the areas of promoting VCT (voluntary counseling and testing) among refugees and locals, supporting sports and youth activities, taking care of HIV orphans through foster families, distributing food supplements to people living with HIV, empowering women’s groups with gardening activities, and establishing an active network of home-based care volunteers. Locals and refugees work together with the DAHACO committee to scale up HIV prevention activities in the district. In February 2009, the Dzaleka refugee camp had 9,425 refugees and asylum seekers.

“Mercer support has been essential in keeping the committee active and motivated despite the high levels of HIV stigma in the camp and surroundings.”

– Ms. Gloria Puetars, Senior Regional UNHCR HIV/AIDS Officer for Southern Africa

MOTHERS2MOTHERS (M2M)

M2M addresses prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) by utilizing the community’s greatest, ever-renewing resource — its own mothers. By employing mothers living with HIV (“Mentor Mothers”) as peer educators and professional members of the health care team, M2M is designed to improve the effective delivery of care for the PMTCT in public health facilities across sub-Saharan Africa and currently operates in seven countries: Lesotho, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa, Swaziland and Zambia. In the past year alone in South Africa, M2M programs expanded from 118 sites to 304. By the end of 2009, they had grown to a total of almost 500 sites across Africa, employing 1,600 women living with HIV and AIDS as mentors. M2M reinforced their commitment to follow up on PMTCT efforts by launching the M2M Innovation Center, designed to refine and evaluate new program elements before introducing them into existing programs. In places where male partners are a key element of the PMTCT process, M2M has begun offering education and support groups for partners and couples, reaching a milestone of more than one million client encounters in 2009.

“With the support of Merck & Co., Inc., mothers2mothers is able to provide more care to more mothers in Lesotho, keeping them healthy and alive to raise their children and preventing their babies from being infected with HIV.”

– Robin A. Smalley, Co-Founder/International Director

CARE MOZAMBIQUE

CARE Mozambique has been implementing programs to support local orphans and vulnerable children and their families in the districts of Wankhwe, Mabote and Gouso in northern Inhambane. The approach includes technical and financial support to organizations to enable them to address the local OVC’s (orphans and vulnerable children) daily health and education challenges. Training workshops targeting CSOs (community service organizations) have been rolled out and concentrate on issues such as the OVC National Plan of Action, the role of civil society, building advocacy skills for improving health and policies relating to OVC, skills to encourage positive living with nutritional support and providing psychosocial assistance and support.

CIVIL SOCIETY ACTION TEAM (CSAT)

CSAT, hosted by the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO), is based in Toronto, Canada. CSAT operates through six hubs in all regions of the world and mobilizes civil society organizations to engage on funding and other opportunities with the Global Fund. In addition, CSAT provides communities with new skills and the necessary tools required to build the capacity of people living with HIV and AIDS.

HIV and AIDS. With funding from Merck & Co., Inc., CSAT works to improve access to technical support and capacity building, and advocates for the participation of key affected populations in programs funded by the Global Fund.

“Support from Merck & Co., Inc. helped ICASO as a global host to coordinate CSAT’s work in mobilizing community groups for Round 9 of the Global Fund as well as interface with the Global Fund in response to emerging issues, such as representation of key affected populations in Country Coordinating Mechanisms.”

– Natalia Causonis, International Coordinator, CSAT

FOOTBALL FOR AN HIV-FREE GENERATION (F4)

Football for an HIV-Free Generation (F4) uses football as the entry point for an evidence-based strategy derived from best practices in HIV prevention for youth, and utilizing communication and sports for development. By leveraging a cluster of strategic partners through activities such as the lead up to the 2010 World Cup, F4 brings together well-established international and African-based organizations, including Merck & Co., Inc., CSI+, UNAIDS, African Broadcast Media Partnership against HIV/AIDS, Kaiser Family Foundation, law (life and Grassroots Soccer (GRS)). This core partnership utilizes media communication and high-level advocacy in a powerful and innovative way that involves public and private sectors. This initiative aims to accelerate the reduction of the rate of HIV infection among young Africans, while simultane-ously making a significant contribution to re-engaging young people across Africa in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

The impact of HIV and AIDS is not gender neutral, and RAISA has focused on gender inequalities as a key driver of the epidemic. VSO/RAISA believes addressing gender inequalities must be placed at the heart of the response to HIV and AIDS. In 2007, with support from Merck & Co., Inc., RAISA launched the “Glove Campaign” to mitigate the risk of HIV infection among home-based workers.

“Support from Merck & Co., Inc. has been timely and appropriate and has made RAISA reach out beyond beneficiaries to policy makers and enabled VSO/RAISA to ensure sustainability in support to the orphans and to the people living with HIV and AIDS and their families.”

– Mr. Bangi Mundetla, Director, Regional AIDS Initiative, Southern Africa

INTERNATIONAL AIDS ECONOMICS NETWORK (IAEN)

IAEN, established in 1993, serves as an international platform and information clearinghouse for policymakers, economists and others involved in understanding and responding to the economic impacts of the AIDS epidemic.

With more than 10,000 members worldwide, IAEN serves as an important resource for economists and policymakers whose access to information in this area is otherwise limited. In 2008, Merck and UNAIDS provided funding to IAEN to support a two-day preconference in Cuernavaca, Mexico. The conference was held prior to the International AIDS Conference in Mexico City. Activities at the preconference included a comprehensive on-line research library as well as a two-day international research symposium.

“Thanks to the invaluable support from Merck & Co., Inc., we were able to initiate work with local partners in Namibia, a new country for F4, and establish our HIV prevention program to reach 6,000 boys and girls by the end of 2010.”

– Mr. G. Kirk Friedrich, Managing Director/Co-Founder, Grassroots Soccer

VOLUNTARY SERVICES OVERSEAS (VSO)

In Southern Africa, VSO has implemented a regional AIDS program called the Regional AIDS Initiative of Southern Africa (RAISA). This initiative aims to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations, government departments and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in their response to the HIV and AIDS epidemic. Many of the grassroots organizations supported by VSO are working in the area of Home Based Care (HBC), a phenomenon that has grown rapidly since the advent of HIV and AIDS.
While Merck & Co., Inc.’s financial support has been essential to sustaining the IAEN and the work of economists in this field, the IAEN particularly appreciates Merck’s advice and guidance in achieving our mission of building the capacity of developing country economists to help policymakers more efficiently and effectively in responding to the HIV and AIDS epidemic.”

– Steven Forsythe, MBA, PhD, Futures Institute and IAEN President

HEALTH ECONOMICS & HIV/AIDS RESEARCH DIVISION (HEARD)

Merck provides general support for HEARD, which conducts applied research and runs development interventions aimed at mobilizing evidence for impact in health and HIV in the SADC (Southern African Development Community) and East Africa region. HEARD has been based since 1998 at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban, South Africa, and collaborates with a range of institutional and individual partners spanning the globe. HEARD’s research agenda is driven by current issues and is aimed at producing knowledge and evidence critical to informing policies and actions. HEARD also supports regional leadership in Southern and Eastern Africa to improve health and address HIV in the region by utilizing evidence on current issues of concern to leaders, and mobilizing evidence to put emerging issues on the agenda of leadership.

DANCE4LIFE

Since its inception in 2003, dance4life has grown into the largest youth movement in the world with the goal of pushing back the spread of HIV and AIDS. In 2008, dance4life Russia was active in 16 regions, reaching out to about 20,000 youth. With a contribution from Merck & Co., Inc., dance4life Russia expanded the program in the Orenburg region, and there are now 30 active sites in the Russian Federation. The project has gained momentum with activities focused on team training, with measurable outcomes among the youth participation in the HIV prevention program.

“Thanks to support from Merck & Co., Inc., it became possible to include the Orenburg region and to expand activities of the dance4life Russia regional organization’s network.”

– Klaartje Spijkers, Fundraising and Evaluation Manager, dance4life international

UCT, HAICU AND TSIBA

The University of Cape Town (UCT) HAICU (HIV/AIDS Coordination, University of Cape Town) and TSIBA (Tertiary School in Business Administration) have collaborated to use best practices that have helped develop relevant, culturally sensitive, factual HIV education and communication tools aimed at local youth from the townships surrounding Cape Town, South Africa. The primary goal of the program is to mitigate HIV stigma and discrimination, while measuring behaviour change through unique activities. With support from Merck & Co., Inc., the program strives to equip at-risk youth with decision-making skills as well as a knowledge base on which to make decisions, while creating a forum to talk openly about issues such as sex and HIV. The combination of HAICU’s medical expertise and experience in HIV education workshop delivery, together with TSIBA’s commitment to experiential learning and a spirit of “Paying it Forward,” have contributed to the unique and successful HIV prevention outreach program.

Educating youth to educate others has delivered a rippling effect through the institution and the wider community, with plans to expand this model in other settings.

“Merck’s support has enabled a unique experiential learning opportunity for young people who have been empowered with skills to listen, interact, understand, tolerate and, ultimately, to grow beyond expectation.”

– Ms. Thokozile Mcopele, Student, Tertiary School in Business Administration, South Africa

NAM

NAM is a community-based organization and registered charity that supports people living and working with HIV by providing accurate, impartial and up-to-date information about HIV and AIDS. NAM believes that wherever you are in the world, accessing accurate information is vital in the global management of HIV. With funding from Merck & Co., Inc., NAM has established a program to provide current and accessible HIV treatment education materials for health care workers in resource-limited settings. The aim of the project is to improve the health and quality of life of people living with HIV and AIDS.

“The ongoing support of Merck has been key in enabling us to develop this highly effective and much acclaimed programme of work.”

– Claire Booth, Funding Development Manager, NAM

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