

Press release

5 December 2007

**Launch of new report on Business and AIDS:
*Business and HIV/AIDS: What have we learnt?***

A new report on business and HIV/AIDS launched today urges developing country governments and donor agencies to work more closely with the private sector in addressing the impacts of HIV and AIDS. It highlights the unique role business plays through its responsibility for occupational health programmes for employees, its capacity in health systems and the social investment which it undertakes in the community.

The report summarises the main findings of three British MPs who travelled to South Africa in September as guests of Business Action for Africa, to learn more about how businesses are responding to the challenges of HIV and AIDS in the workplace and in the communities in which they operate. HIV infection rates in South Africa have soared in just 15 years to among the highest in the world. Business Action for Africa and the companies who initiated and supported the trip, AngloAmerican, SABMiller and Merck Sharp & Dohme, believe that the South African experience offers important lessons to other countries faced with a growing HIV/AIDS problem, such as China, India and Russia.

Most importantly, it argues that business should be recognised as an important partner, alongside government, NGOs and donor organisations, in the fight against HIV and AIDS and that ways must be found of optimising private sector resources. No one sector acting alone can hope to stem the rising tide of HIV infection and AIDS-related death in high-prevalence countries such as South Africa.

David Borrow MP said:

“It is unrealistic to expect a government in the developing world to cope with the AIDS epidemic without help and partnership in the business community. Major international businesses should be able to provide prevention and treatment programmes in partnership with the government.”

Lynne Featherstone MP said:

“If HIV and AIDS is to be beaten to the point where it becomes a disease you live with, not die with - and if new infections are to be reduced and reduced and reduced - it will take all of them together, government, business, NGOs and donors, to turn this pandemic around.”

The report recognises the positive impact that a number of employers are making through their workplace and community programmes. Commenting on the trip, Sally Keeble MP said:

“I was incredibly impressed with the very obvious expertise with which the companies approached the issue of HIV and AIDS... the inter-relationship between private and public was also very evident.”

The MPs offered a number of policy recommendations on how private sector resources can be optimised, and how more public-private partnership can be encouraged. These include a suggestion for business to gather good practice together in a voluntary code of conduct which could guide companies operating in high-prevalence countries, and measures aimed at helping more small and medium-sized enterprises to take action on HIV and AIDS in the workplace.

The MPs presented their conclusions to John Hutton, Secretary of State for the Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) at a parliamentary briefing on 28 November. The Secretary of State expressed strong support for the report and its findings and committed his department to considering the recommendations in weeks to come, to identify the areas in which BERR can support their implementation.

The office of Andrew Mitchell MP, Shadow Secretary of State for International Development, also issued a statement of support for the “well-informed, insightful and progressive report”. Mr Mitchell said:

“By investing in poor countries, business plays a part in tackling poverty by creating jobs, bringing much-needed capital, and sharing technology. It is clear too that business has a vital role to play in tackling HIV/AIDS: looking after employees is ‘good business’ in both senses of the word. The companies identified in this report should be commended for the lead they have taken. “

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Notes to editors

1. Business Action for Africa is a network of businesses and business organisations with operations in Africa and committed to supporting Africa’s development. The network was created following the Commission for Africa and G8 Gleneagles Summit in 2005, and today has over 160 members.
2. Business Action for Africa works through collective advocacy, by mobilising a business voice for policies to end poverty; collective action, through catalysing business-led partnerships across Africa; and sharing good practice, by harnessing latest thinking and showcasing best practice.
3. David Borrow MP (Labour – South Ribble) is vice-chairman of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on AIDS, and holds office on a number of others, particularly those concerned with countries in Africa. Lynne Featherstone MP was appointed in December 2006 as the Liberal Democrats’ Shadow Secretary of State for International Development. Sally Keeble MP (Labour) has been MP for Northampton North since 1997, and served as a minister in the Department for International Development from 2002- 2003.
4. The report and its recommendations were presented at a meeting on Wednesday 5 December 2007 at the offices of Anglo American in London. Edward Bickham, Executive Vice President, External Affairs for Anglo American, presented the report’s main findings. Sally Keeble MP and Lynne Featherstone MP were present to share their impressions and participated in the discussion.

For further information or to arrange follow-up interviews please contact Hester le Roux at hester.leroux@businessactionforafrica.org or on +44 (0)7803 232 530

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report highlights the role that the private sector plays in tackling the impacts of HIV and AIDS in developing countries. It makes the case for closer cooperation between business and governments, civil society and donors in fighting AIDS. It also argues that lessons learnt in sub-Saharan Africa, the region most affected by the pandemic, should be applied in other countries where prevalence rates are on the increase.

Three members of the British Parliament (MPs) travelled to South Africa as guests of Business Action for Africa to learn more about what companies are doing to help address the effects of HIV and AIDS. They found that there is a clear and unique role for the private sector due to its responsibility for the occupational health programmes for employees, its capacity in health systems and the social investment which it undertakes in the community.

The businesses showcased are having a strong positive impact through comprehensive prevention, treatment and care programmes that reach beyond their workplaces into the broader community. There is a growing understanding of which policies are the most effective in reducing infection rates and ensuring access to treatment for all those who need it. Unfortunately these large companies are not representative or typical; many others lack the resources, know-how or conviction to implement effective programmes. Good practice needs to be extended to more employers, in particular the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) who employ a large proportion of the workforce. Dynamic and pro-active business associations have a key role to play in facilitating the sharing and wider implementation of good practice through strategic partnerships.

On partnership there was a strong sense of a missed opportunity, with less evidence than had been expected of productive cooperation between the public and private sectors in fighting AIDS. One sector acting alone cannot mount an effective response to the extremely high levels of HIV infection and AIDS mortality rates experienced in South Africa and it is clear that partnership between government, business, civil society and donors is key. The hope was expressed that South Africa's new National Strategic Plan would pave the way for renewed efforts to forge essential partnerships.

These messages of pursuing closer cooperation with the private sector and encouraging the widespread implementation of good practice in the workplace are highly relevant to countries faced with burgeoning infection rates. Urgent collective, comprehensive and strategic action is crucial if the rapid escalation in HIV infection and AIDS-related deaths experienced over the past 15 years in sub-Saharan Africa are to be averted elsewhere.

These findings gave rise to a number of **policy recommendations**. For more details about these, please contact Hester le Roux at hester.leroux@businessactionforafrica.org or on +44 (0)7803 232 530.

This project was supported by the following companies:

1. SABMiller/SA Breweries Ltd

http://www.sabmiller.com/sabmiller.com/en_gb/Our+responsibility/Our+priorities/HIV+Aids/

SABMiller has its origins in South Africa where the original brewing operations of the group were founded in 1895. Today, SAB Ltd, its South African subsidiary, has seven breweries in South Africa. In addition, it obtained the franchise for bottling and distributing Coca-Cola products in 1976, separately managed by the Amalgamated Beverages Industries (“ABI”). The company employs 8,600 people in South Africa and 67,000 globally.

2. Anglo American plc

<http://www.angloamerican.co.uk/cr/hiv aids/>

Anglo American plc is a UK-based, FTSE Top 10, mining and metals company, with significant interests in commodities such as platinum (40% of global production), base metals, ferrous metals, industrial minerals (Tarmac) and coal. The company was first established in South Africa in 1917, and today is the third largest diversified mining company in the world. It has operations or exploration activities in over 40 countries, and employs around 90, 000 people in its subsidiaries.

3. MSD (Pty) Ltd/Merck

http://www.merck.com/cr/enabling_access/developing_world/hiv/

MSD (Pty) Ltd is the registered South African subsidiary of New Jersey-based Merck & Co. Inc. A global leader in the pharmaceuticals industry, Merck has operations in North America, South America, Europe, Asia and Australia, in addition to South Africa and a number of other African countries. In South Africa, MSD employs 300 people. MSD works in highly specialised fields, such as research, industrial pharmacology and medicine. The company operates a world class manufacturing facility which supplies novel medicines to both the local and export markets.

4. Standard Chartered PLC

http://www.standardchartered.com/sustainability/community_HIV.html

Standard Chartered PLC is listed on both the London Stock Exchange and the Hong Kong Stock Exchange and is consistently ranked in the top 25 among FTSE-100 companies by market capitalisation. It has a history of over 150 years in banking and operates in many of the world's fastest-growing markets with an extensive global network of more than 1,400 branches in over 50 countries. The bank employs almost 60,000 people, representing over 100 nationalities, worldwide. Standard Chartered Bank opened its first operations in South Africa in 1863 and has evolved through the years with the Group.