

# Fighting for Life

## PSI and Business Tackle HIV/AIDS

### The Global HIV/AIDS Pandemic

Every year, approximately 5 million people contract HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Globally, 38 million people are living with AIDS, including more than 2 million children. Since HIV was first identified in 1981, 20 million people have died from the disease, the vast majority of them in the developing world.

HIV/AIDS has particularly devastated southern Africa, where an estimated 25 percent of the adult population is HIV-positive and more than 12 million children have been orphaned as a result of the disease. Even in some of Africa's most advanced economies, the outlook is grim. In Botswana, more than 38 percent of the adult population is HIV-positive. South Africa is grappling with HIV-prevalence above 25 percent. Nearly one third of Zimbabwe's population is expected to die from the virus.

South and southeast Asia face similar infection rates unless steps are taken to prevent the further spread of HIV/AIDS. Currently, more than 6.5 percent of the total population is HIV-positive, and infection rates are expected to rise as they did in southern Africa.

### The Impact of HIV/AIDS on Business

HIV impacts many aspects of business operations—its workforce, local consumer base and profitability.

For workers with HIV, there are increased insurance and benefits costs, declining productivity, days lost due to sickness and death benefits. Attendance at funerals by colleagues also leads to increased absenteeism.

For workers with family members infected with HIV, time away from work for care and support can be substantial.

Where HIV is depleting disposable incomes, fewer citizens can afford the products and services that businesses produce. Corporate reputations and goodwill can be affected if employers are perceived to be doing little to stem the tide of infection in communities where they operate. Finally, high mortality creates unstable political, economic and social environments, jeopardizing the value of current and future business investments.

UNAIDS has estimated that when HIV-prevalence rates exceed 20 percent (a level surpassed by all of Africa's largest economies), annual GDP falls by approxi-



Mass-media campaigns educate workers on company policies and encourage them to protect themselves against HIV. This poster, part of a Nigerian Bottling Company campaign, emphasizes company support for the HIV-positive and educates workers on HIV-prevention.



# HEALTHworks

SOCIAL MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS FOR HEALTH

Christy Talbot  
PSI **HEALTH**works  
1120 19th Street, NW  
Suite 600  
Washington, DC 20036  
T (202) 785-0072  
F (202) 572-4678  
E [ctalbot@psi.org](mailto:ctalbot@psi.org)  
[www.psi.org](http://www.psi.org)

mately 2.6 percent. By 2020, according to UNAIDS, four African countries will see their workforces shrink by more than 30 percent and fourteen countries will lose between 10 and 30 percent of their productive workers as a result of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

### **How PSI Collaborates with Business to Fight HIV/AIDS**

Throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America, PSI implements quality HIV-prevention programs promoting consistent and correct condom use, mutual fidelity and voluntary counseling and testing (VCT). Programs typically include behavior change and mass media campaigns, employ peer educators and drama skits to reach low-literacy audiences, enlist local celebrities to reduce stigma, provide lifesaving commodities to those who need them most, advocate personal responsibility and empowerment and provide access to quality voluntary counseling and testing.

Many businesses have discovered that an effective method of reducing the impact of HIV/AIDS on the bottom-line is to fight the disease within their communities. Reducing a community's overall HIV-infection rate by encouraging positive behavior change lowers the risk of infection for all employees.

Corporate support for mass media campaigns offers the greatest opportunity to publicize the PSI/business collaboration. Corporations have also enlisted PSI peer educators to counsel their employees, sought our help in the distribution of information and condoms at worksites and provided employer-paid voluntary counseling and testing vouchers to their workers.

If employees become infected with HIV, they desperately need access to safe water and malaria protection. PSI encourages business to evaluate "bundling"

PSI's HIV-prevention, malaria prevention and treatment and water treatment products to cover their employees and the surrounding community.

### **PSI HEALTHworks**

PSI's **HEALTHworks** programs offer corporate partners comprehensive approaches to the risks that HIV, malaria and unsafe water impose on their workers and communities. Drawing on the talents and wide program experience of our staff, **HEALTHworks** projects are custom-designed to suit business environments in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Population Services International (PSI) is a nonprofit organization established in 1970. It is one of the largest distributors of lifesaving health products, services and information in the world, with affiliates and programs in more than

65 countries that manage and promote 178 brands of health products and services. More than 95 percent of PSI's 6,000 employees are nationals of the countries in which they work and deeply committed to protecting the health and well-being

of low-income people through malaria control, water treatment, HIV/AIDS prevention, family planning and maternal and child health initiatives.

### **Case Study: Coca-Cola Fights HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe**

In 2003, the Coca-Cola Company and PSI partnered to transport lifesaving commodities on Coca-Cola trucks throughout Zimbabwe. This allowed PSI/Zimbabwe's HIV-prevention program to distribute products and information to even the most rural and hard-to-reach Zimbabweans, while raising visibility and goodwill for Coca-Cola.