

Private Sector Panel



*Partnerships in
unfamiliar territory*



“Partnerships in unfamiliar territory”

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Executive Summary

Partnerships for health have drawn significant interest in recent years, due to the prospect of combining public and private sector expertise, networks, and willpower for greater health impact. As traditional aid and donor funding become increasingly restricted, innovative approaches to help bridge financial gaps become even more important to achieve targeted health impact.

Expectations are particularly pronounced in the HIV/AIDS sector, where we see a US\$26.2 billion funding need by 2020 to meet global HIV targets set by UNAIDS. The private sector, for its part, continues to demonstrate appetite and interest in partnering to solve health challenges. Accenture's research with the UN Global Compact has demonstrated that the private sector increasingly desires to share their experience, capabilities, and technologies to strengthen health systems in a sustainable manner, and is evolving from traditional donation-based approaches to addressing social and development challenges¹.

Many different types of private sector engagement exist for strengthening health systems. For HIV/AIDS, the private sector brings a broad range of skills to improve disease management across the value chain, including supply chain logistics, data management, technology, and innovative financing. Yet despite strong progress made in engaging the private sector to support the HIV/AIDS response, barriers and challenges continue to be faced by many actors when attempting to partner with this diverse sector.

To ensure a fully funded and more effective response to HIV/AIDS, the A2018 Amsterdam Planning Group has organized a Private Sector Panel at the AIDS 2018 Conference. The Panel seeks to bring together leaders from the public and private sector to discuss the opportunities and limitations

of private sector contributions to the HIV/AIDS response. This paper was commissioned by the A2018 Amsterdam Planning Group to reflect on the existing body of knowledge on private sector engagement. It is intended to advance discussions on how partnerships with the private sector can be enhanced to address challenges and increase investment in HIV/AIDS.

Prior to diving into these topics, it is important to note that both the private and public sector are comprised of various entities of diverse scope, scale, and operations. Within the private sector, there are private companies, philanthropies, donors, and foundations, all across a wide range of industries. The public sector is also comprised of highly diverse actors, such as public enterprises, national and state governments, and UN agencies. Both sectors, alongside civil society, have critical roles to play within the HIV/AIDS response.

Public and private sector actors have different needs, roles, and rationales for engaging in HIV/AIDS partnerships. For example, national governments may prioritize leveraging the expertise of private sector companies to strengthen their health systems, while UN agencies may focus on the private sector's innovation capabilities and funding. The private sector, on the other hand, may wish to engage in more socially responsible activities given their impact on the geographies and communities in which they operate. Alternatively, the private sector

1. https://www.accenture.com/t20180404T213323Z_w_/us-en/_acnmedia/PDF-74/Accenture-Transforming-Partnerships-for-the-SDGs-UNGC-Accenture-Strategy.pdf

may have more transformative ambitions to drive impact and returns from shared value approaches that combine social and business goals more deliberately. Throughout this paper, unless stated otherwise, when referring to the private sector, the views expressed are primarily from private sector companies², and when referring to the public sector, the primary focus are bilateral and multilateral donors.

Discussions with private sector companies, foundations, and donors revealed a range of persistent barriers to partnership — including misalignment of perceptions, expectations, and levels of engagement. A series of recommendations have been proposed to help overcome these challenges, and include methods to improve relationships, trust, engagement, and impact. This paper discusses these issues and opportunities in further detail, with the aim of enabling the creation and advancement of impactful private sector partnerships to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

2. While some philanthropic private sector entities were interviewed, we were unable to engage a representative sample to credibly reflect the perspectives of this group in this paper.

1. Evolution of Global Health Partnerships and Observed Trends

Over the past two decades, the global HIV/AIDS response has observed a significant mobilization of resources to combat the growing epidemic, including notable levels of philanthropic donations and bilateral aid. Yet despite these resources, as of 2016, approximately 36.7 million people were still living with HIV/AIDS worldwide, with an average of approximately 5,000 new infections per day³.

A regression in funding for the HIV/AIDS response has been observed in recent years, most notably following the economic crisis in 2008. Several years of flat-line funding were observed as global aid budgets began to constrain. This trend of disinvestment has continued and worsened - between 2015 and 2016, a 7% decrease in donor funding was observed throughout low and middle-income countries (LMICs)⁴.

With the overall disease burden in mind and a determination to increase urgency, UNAIDS set an ambitious Fast-Track approach to ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030. To achieve this goal, UNAIDS estimates that US\$26.2 billion will be required by 2020 to meet global HIV targets⁵. However, as of 2016, only a reported US\$19.1 billion was available for the HIV/AIDS response in LMICs⁶. With only two years left to reach the first target, a substantive gap remains to be filled. In light of these trends, there is a need to think differently about how to meet these targets in time. In addition to the efficient use of existing resources, there is a need to better engage all sectors to become active contributors – financially and otherwise – to the HIV/AIDS response.

The hugely diverse private sector has played a notable and wide-ranging role in the HIV/AIDS

response over the past several decades. In the early years, civil society and human resource demands pushed the private and public sector together to gain a better understanding of the issue at hand, and to share knowledge and learnings with one another. This was critical in supporting private sector companies to initiate workplace policies and practices on education, prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS. For example, Levi Strauss & Co. developed awareness, safety and treatment programs supported and driven by their leadership team, as HIV/AIDS was of significant concern to the headquarters employee base in San Francisco⁷. Chevron also made notable investments in its workforce, by developing workplace- and community-based education, awareness-building, prevention and treatment programs across the company's worldwide operations⁸. Similarly, Heineken was one of the first multinational corporations to develop workplace prevention and education programs, and in 2001, Heineken expanded its HIV employee program to include access to antiretroviral drugs⁹. Over time, growing and continued investment from the private sector, especially from those that had a significant part of their workforce impacted by the virus, evolved these practices into strategic business drivers for their work globally, particularly in LMICs.

3. <https://www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics/overview/data-and-trends/global-statistics>

4. <http://files.kff.org/attachment/Report-Donor-Government-Funding-for-HIV-in-Low-and-Middle-Income-Countries-in-2016>

5. http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/UNAIDS_FactSheet_en.pdf

6. http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/UNAIDS_FactSheet_en.pdf

7. <http://www.levistrauss.com/sustainability/people/hiv aids/>

8. <https://www.chevron.com/stories/global-business-coalition-recognizes-chevron-hiv aids-policy>

9. http://archive.gbchealth.org/member_profiles/1436/

As corporate actors continued to impact the societies and communities that they operate in, their thinking around corporate social responsibility (CSR) evolved. Flagship programs in the HIV/AIDS sector emerged from several large companies including Chevron, MAC Cosmetics, and Kenneth Cole. As the private sector began to more seriously invest in its corporate responsibility agenda, the need for public-private partnerships became more evident. Businesses grew to understand the value that could be derived from applying their unique core business capabilities, such as financial management, marketing, supply chain and distribution, towards global health issues.

Over time, the economic value of these partnerships became clear. HIV/AIDS has the power to destroy not just families, but also communities and workforces during some of their most productive years. For those companies with employees or suppliers in high-risk areas, the potential loss of productivity resulting from absenteeism or even death is high, as is the cost of high medical premiums for those on a company-provided medical plan. At the same time, the countries especially hard-hit by the HIV/AIDS crisis are some of the fastest-growing markets in the world, and as families and individuals are forced to exit the workforce to respond to illness or the loss of a family member, economic growth slows. When companies enter these partnerships to combat HIV/AIDS, they can draw from a healthier and more productive workforce, and create a healthier market in which to deliver their goods and services.

In recent years, private sector corporations have increasingly shifted their thinking from a focus on philanthropy to one grounded in leveraging their core competencies to contribute to the HIV/AIDS response. There are a multitude of ways in which the private sector, through its diversity in industry,

scope, scale, and capabilities, can effectively engage with other private and public-sector actors to generate impact (Figure 1). A comprehensive overview of the different roles of the private sector can also be found in a background paper developed by STOP AIDS UK: The Role of the Private Sector¹⁰.

For example, PEPFAR and the pharmaceutical company Johnson & Johnson came together to coordinate efforts and mobilize partners to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV (PMTCT). By leveraging Johnson & Johnson's marketing capabilities, programs aimed to teach young girls about their health, and ensured they had access to treatment options¹¹. Product (RED) has also leveraged the marketing capabilities of private sector companies to raise over \$500M for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, working with diverse partners such as Apple and Bank of America¹². Another example is the partnership between Vodafone and the Lesotho Ministry of Health. Vodafone leverages their mobile payment expertise to provide a mobile money service (m-Pesa) that supports transportation costs for children and mothers to access HIV treatment. Vodafone also provides an app for healthcare professionals that enables the tracking of patients in remote areas¹³. The multinational technology company IBM has contributed their expertise in data analytics and enterprise cloud computing technologies and services in partnership with Yale University to expand HIV testing, treatment, and prevention for pregnant women and mothers in Ghana¹⁴. The pan-African banking conglomerate Ecobank and the Global Fund initiated a partnership in 2013 with a focus on leveraging Ecobank's innovative financial management capabilities to strengthen the financial management capabilities of Global Fund's Sub-Recipients through the provision of technical assistance and capacity building expertise and services¹⁵.

10. <https://stopaids.org.uk/resources/the-role-of-the-private-sector-in-global-health/>

11. <https://www.pepfar.gov/partnerships/ppp/c60925.htm>

12. <https://www.red.org>

13. <http://www.vodafone.com/content/index/media/vodafone-group-releases/2016/foundation-helps-save.html#>

14. https://www.ibm.com/blogs/citizen-ibm/2014/04/mensah_ghana_hiv/

15. <https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/private-ngo-partners/partners/ecobank/>

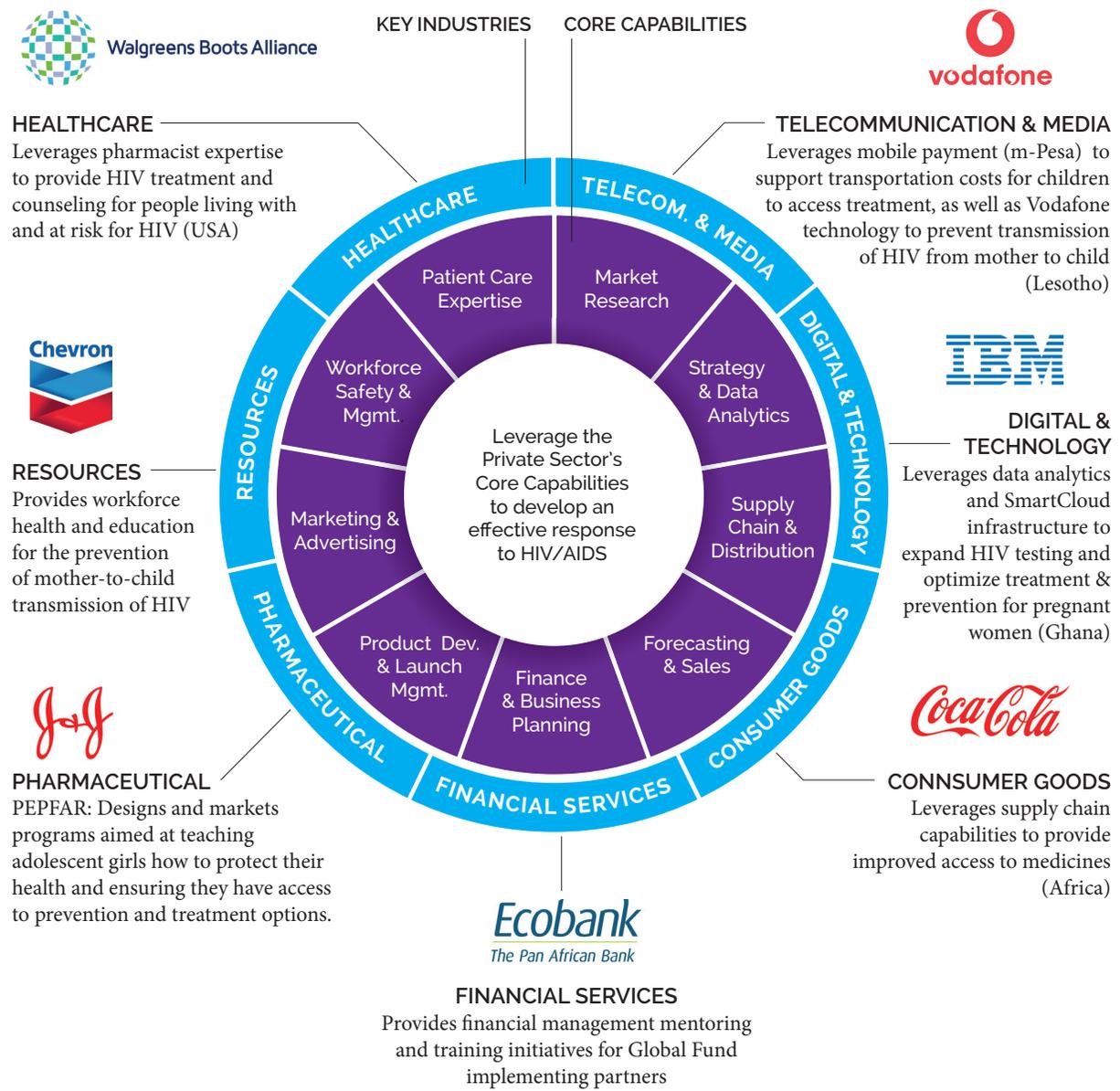


Figure 1: Leveraging the Private Sector's Core Capabilities for the HIV/AIDS response

Despite the expansion of innovative partnerships with the private sector that engage both their financial contributions and core capabilities, challenges continue to be observed. These challenges often limit the impact of partnerships. The following sections identify a few of the most

notable issues today as identified through interviews with various leaders from the public and private sector, and explore opportunities to form effective and sustainable partnerships with the private sector to support the HIV/AIDS response.

2. Key Barriers and Challenges

In speaking with private sector leaders who have been or are currently involved in HIV/AIDS partnerships, four key challenges were identified that are hindering partnerships from initiating, engaging in an effective manner, and delivering on their intended impact. These issues currently affect both the public and private sector, and are largely due to biases attributed to prevailing misconceptions, miscommunication, and mistrust. This section discusses why these barriers may exist, and the limitations these challenges often cause towards fully realizing the potential of innovative partnerships.

Misaligned funding expectations

With over US\$26 billion needed to fast-track the HIV/AIDS response by 2020, the public sector and civil society are increasingly turning to the private sector to help fill the gap. Projections show that combined domestic and international investment in HIV/AIDS will not meet this target. Since 2010, Development Assistance for Health has remained flat or decreased, which has put greater pressure on LMICs. In Rwanda, a decline in funding for HIV has been observed over the last 8 years, with this

negative trend expected to continue into the future (Figure 2). The Global Fund and PEPFAR forecast external HIV funds to decline by 53% from 2015 to 2022¹⁶. In addition, donors are withdrawing from middle income countries (MICs), where a large proportion of people living with HIV reside. Current Official Development Assistance (ODA) now has a strong focus on poverty reduction in lower-income countries, leaving health programming in MICs underfunded.

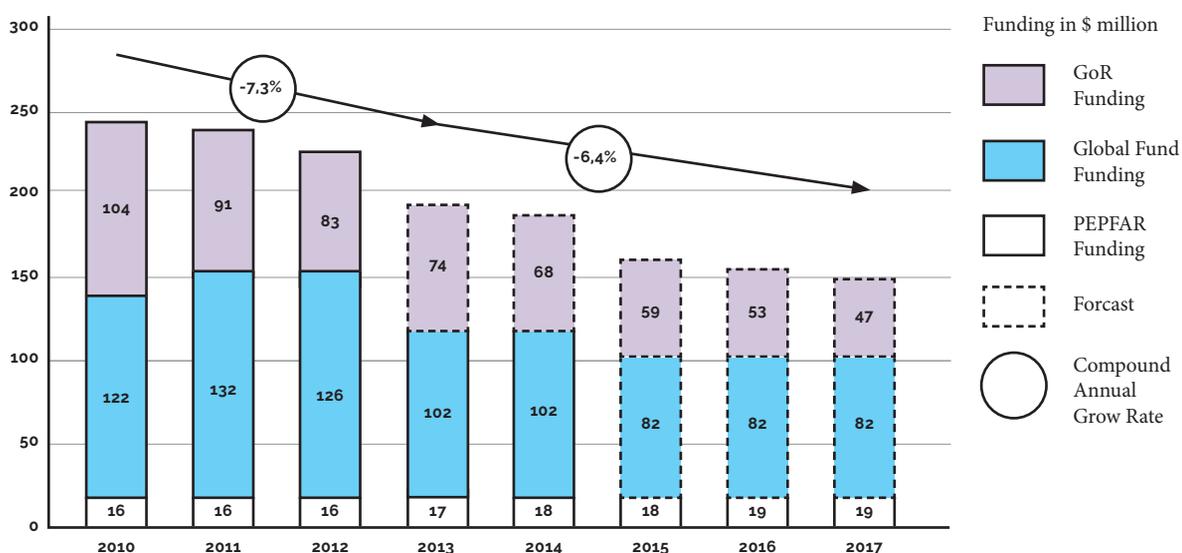


Figure 2: HIV Funding Changes in Rwanda¹⁷

16. <https://www.avert.org/professionals/hiv-around-world/global-response/funding>

17. Institute of HIV/AIDS Disease Prevention & Control, Rwanda Biomedical Centre

In this changing environment, we have seen traditional donors call on the private sector to step up to the plate, often with the expectation that the private sector would help to fill the vast funding gaps. However, several private sector companies interviewed that have historically provided substantial financial contributions to HIV/AIDS reported recent changes in their investment priorities. As one private sector company noted, “We are unlikely to see large corporate signature HIV projects in the developing world in the future”. Particularly for companies outside the health industry, there is a shift in focus to issues that more closely align to their core business. In the oil and gas industry for example, many companies are seeing marked improvements in their employee health and wellness, and are now exploring new focus areas, such as clean water access or environmental issues.

It is important to keep in mind that private sector companies are beholden in large part to their shareholders, and are under increasingly high scrutiny to ensure every decision made adds value to the business, including their CSR programs. Companies have therefore become more tailored in how they think about and approach social impact, as well as how they maximize the value of CSR contributions through increased alignment with business priorities.

In some cases, private sector companies expressed a shift in their funding priorities – from global to local. Given the impact of companies on local communities, it is important for investments to be visible and have an impact where companies operate. However, in many cases, it is quite challenging to direct dollars provided to global donors towards the areas and issues of interest for these local communities. As one private sector leader noted, “It takes a significant amount of stakeholder management to help a community understand why there may not be enough money to support an issue that is really important to them when big dollars are being directed into the country

to an area where we aren’t even located.” With stable or, in some cases, shrinking pots of funding available for philanthropy by the private sector, it becomes difficult to continue providing unrestricted dollars to global donors where direct impact in relation to business is harder to quantify and more difficult to sell in the boardroom.

In addition, many private sector companies expressed an interest in engaging in partnerships where both financial contributions and core capabilities play a significant role, thus allowing them to gain further recognition and value for their investment. However, according to a few private sector companies, there is a perceived discount that is applied by the public sector to contributions of core capabilities vs. financial resources. One private sector actor noted, when discussing prior efforts to initiate a partnership with a large global health donor, “Due to [the donor’s] expectations of the private sector, they were flatly offended by the articulation of an amount they considered to be low and couldn’t believe we didn’t just have millions lying around to sign a check”. Such statements aren’t reflective of all discussions between sectors, but they have the potential to reinforce the fear of engagement that many private sector actors hold, resulting in apathy. Also, while leading with a discussion on funding is an easy way to begin a conversation on a potential partnership, it also can act as a roadblock to more innovative discussions on how two organizations can collaboratively work together and leverage their core competencies. There is a perceived misalignment of expectations from the public sector on the role of private sector companies in the HIV/AIDS response.

Lack of Trust

A significant issue that continues to deter the exploration and formation of cross-sector partnerships is a lack of trust from both sides. In terms of the public sector, some still base their perceptions of private sector companies on misguided actions from 20 years ago, including the pharmaceutical lawsuit in South Africa preventing the import of cheaper antiretroviral medicine¹⁸. Such actions reinforced stereotypes that continue to exist today in the minds of many public-sector and civil society actors, and make them hesitant to believe that private sector companies would be interested in forming a meaningful partnership without letting ulterior, for-profit motives get in the way. Unfortunate occurrences in recent years haven't helped to dissipate these negative perceptions either. Only two years ago, in 2016, Turing Pharmaceuticals achieved notoriety after significantly increasing the price of Daraprim from less than twenty dollars to seven hundred and fifty dollars¹⁹.

It's important not to let such examples define the private sector as a whole. The private sector is not one uniform entity, but rather is comprised of a vast and differentiated group of organizations, encompassing multi-national companies, national companies, social ventures, and small and medium enterprises. They span across all kinds of industries, from media and technology to consumer goods and services. Coupled with this understanding comes the realization that these numerous organizations have diverse missions and core values, incentives and motives for wanting to engage in global health initiatives.

“We see a lot of speed bumps and road blocks that are built off trust gaps that exist but aren't completely valid”.

Private sector leader

Many private sector companies are aware of these trust issues but are uncertain of how to overcome or change these perceptions over time. Several private sector companies expressed an inability to be open and transparent regarding their business motivations when attempting to engage in partnerships. In the rare instances where they have the chance to share their motivations, they often encounter judgments and biases that lead to a dismantling or delay in the formation of partnerships.

The prevalent trust issues seen today are not one-sided. Private sector companies often question how funds are spent, and the value per dollar. When describing how funds are spent, one private sector actor asked, “Where is the money really going? We would rather give our dollars straight to the beneficiaries”. Throughout the public and private sectors alike, there is a need to better understand the motivations and pressures of all actors coming to the table when forming any partnership involving an investment of time, trust, resources, or funding.

18. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1119675/>

19. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/21/business/a-huge-overnight-increase-in-a-drugs-price-raises-protests.html>

Brand Protection/Risk Aversion

Whether it be a corporation, foundation, or a donor, one of the most important characteristics of any organization is brand reputation. As a result, organizations are often careful about who they choose to engage or partner with in order to protect their brand. More commonly across the public sector, organizations shy away from partnering with private sector companies if there's a potential risk of having their reputation jeopardized. This risk is compounded by increased pressure from stakeholders, including governments and civil society, to be cautious in their engagement with the private sector. Despite best intentions, acting in such a cautious manner without taking time to fully understand the partnering organization can be limiting, especially if we truly seek to expand the number of partners involved in the HIV/AIDS response and ultimately create larger impact.

“Partnerships are a balance of risk and return. Currently the center of gravity isn't in the right place and doesn't maximize the potential that private sector partnerships could have”.

Public sector donor

One of the more common rationales behind this behavior, is the notion that there is a “conflict of interest” that prevents organizations interested in global health from actually getting involved. A recent example of this is the Global Fund's partnership with Heineken, which was set up to have Heineken lend its expertise in logistics and communications to support the Global Fund in better reaching specific groups that are most at risk of HIV, tuberculosis and malaria²⁰. A publication on Heineken's business practices as an employer in Africa working with brand promoters, resulted in the Global Fund's decision to put the partnership on hold. It is appropriate to address misconduct. However, further discussion is warranted on the

public sector's willingness to partner with those potentially doing harm in order to improve practices. While such a discussion must be done with care, given different perspectives on this topic, the absence of a public debate may cause more harm than good on the end beneficiaries partners are ultimately trying to serve. As one private sector leader stated, “How can we solve the global AIDS problem if we don't utilize all the capabilities of the private sector?” What's more, the Global Fund has previous experience partnering with an unlikely private sector actor to generate global health outcomes. In 2010, a partnership with Coca Cola was initiated, known as Project Last Mile, which applies Coca-Cola's supply-chain management and marketing expertise to support African governments in reaching the 'last mile' to deliver life-saving medicines and supplies to the hardest-to-reach communities²¹. Now in its 8th year of partnership, their impact has expanded to over seven different countries, where demand and participation from local governments and ministries has generated sustainable change.

One private sector leader noted that, “...the color of money is often considered by the public and private sector in order to protect themselves without truly thinking through the ultimate cost to the patient. Shouldn't we instead leave the decision of whether or not a partnership makes sense with the countries pertaining to the affected populations?” Building on this perspective, how can partners mitigate risk for organizations on both sides, while still leveraging the sought after and unique capabilities of the private sector to effectively and collaboratively support the fight against HIV/AIDS? As one private sector leader commented, “In the climate change response, there was an acceptance to work with organizations that are positive and negative. When it comes to public health, there seems to be a different dynamic around that”.

20. <http://www.theheinekencompany.com/media/media-releases/press-releases/2018/01/2164014>

21. <https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/news/2017-06-08-coca-cola-s-project-last-mile-expands-to-liberia-and-swaziland-strengthening-health-systems-across-africa/>

Failure to Maintain Momentum

Even in the cases where issues with brand perception or conflict of interest are overcome and cross-sectoral partnerships are formed, it can be difficult to keep the momentum going past the initiation phase. Both the public and private sector involved in cross-sectoral initiatives in HIV/AIDS expressed challenges on multiple levels, from a perceived loss of urgency given future predictions around the epidemic, to issues with engaging and maintaining champions, both within the organization and externally in regions of interest.

One private sector leader expressed that the way in which we currently talk about HIV/AIDS worldwide is a significant part of the problem. Conversations today are about the end of HIV/AIDS. Statements currently convey that the global health crisis will be over by the year 2030, with most of the work to be done completed by 2020. Despite this not having a strong backing by data and analysis, these statements undoubtedly have an impact and reduce the sense of urgency among many actors. This mindset may cause previous contributors of the HIV/AIDS response to invest in other, seemingly more critical global health needs.

“If you're a company looking to engage or continue engaging in HIV/AIDS, you could take it upon yourself to be the company that brings HIV/AIDS to an end, or you could convince yourself that this is an already crowded field, so HIV/AIDS doesn't have as much urgency as it used to. It's very concerning”.

Private sector leader

Coupled with the issue of urgency, there is also a significant challenge around engaging the right level of leadership and securing their involvement for a substantial length of time. In recent discussions with private sector companies engaged in HIV/AIDS partnerships, over one-third expressed frustration and concern over their inability to maintain internal and external leadership involvement over the course of the partnership. In addition, even in cases where leadership played an active role in the partnership, what often mattered more was whether there was active engagement from leaders at both a global and local level. Failure to obtain buy-in from national and local government leaders meant that progress was either stopped short during the implementation phase of a partnership, or was made in an unsustainable manner, with solutions or services ending as soon as direct involvement from the private sector was no longer present.

Engagement from senior leadership is only half the battle. Current leadership turnover rates are also significantly hindering the potential impact of cross-sectoral partnerships in HIV/AIDS. On recognizing when to walk away from a partnership, one private sector leader stated that changes in leadership are often a deal breaker, knowing that all too often, the partnership is no longer considered a priority from that point forward. Many private sector leaders working in similar cross-sectoral partnerships expressed a similar loss of momentum when there was a transition in leadership, sometimes to the point where the private sector companies had to revisit why they were even at the table to begin with.

3. Recommendations to Create More Effective Partnerships in the HIV/AIDS Response

Overcoming the aforementioned challenges will require a change in perception from all parties, as well as new ways of working and collaborating. The following key recommendations highlight what mindsets, behaviors, and actions private and public sector actors can adopt in order to more effectively engage with one another in tackling global health issues, particularly HIV/AIDS, and to support the achievement of the ambitious HIV/AIDS targets and milestones set for the global response.

Establishing trust

Building relationships to transform partners into advocates

There is always a brand and reputation risk for any organization joining a new partnership, particularly if that partnership includes actors that the organization may not know well or has not worked with in the past. Working to build trust is critical not only for the success of a partnership, but also to create lasting advocates for an organization's mission and future work. One private sector leader noted that, thanks to investing in building a strong relationship with their public-sector partner, they were able to grow their impact and engage in additional partnerships. "After obtaining great outcomes in a state partnership, our government partner was able to refer us to others and help build trust with neighboring states. This allowed us to have far greater success than knocking on doors ourselves". Having a relationship founded on trust is also critical to handle unanticipated circumstances more effectively and reduce unnecessary strain or disengagement throughout the partnership.

"We invest a lot of time in relationship building and management so that our partnerships can weather challenges such as a change in course or direction".

Private sector leader

Investing time in building trust and strengthening the relationships between organizations involved in cross-sectoral partnerships is valuable to ensure an enduring and outcomes-focused effort, and to create advocates that can attest to the true motives of the private sector in the future.

Understanding intentions

Ensuring all actors start and maintain an open mindset in global health initiatives and partnerships

When approaching a partnership, particularly one with cross-sectoral actors, arriving at the table with the right level of understanding of, and an open perspective towards, every entity involved is critical. This not only fosters a feeling of comradeship, but also allows for effective trust and relationship building from the onset. In discussions with public and private sector actors, nearly all individuals noted that having the right mindset upfront was necessary in setting the partnership up for success. Recognizing that no sector alone has all the capabilities needed to achieve the ambitious HIV/AIDS milestones set for the global response, spending time to understand and learn from one another can lower the barriers that have made it difficult for different sectors to come together.

“Having a learning mindset, and shifting our approach to one of humility makes a big difference”.

Private sector leader

Small changes in the way one even gets to the partnership table can have a tremendous impact in the perceptions of all actors. As one private sector leader noted, “We participated in a meeting with our civil society partners that was held in a remote location. We travelled together and stayed in the same housing for almost a week. This dissolved barriers and helped to lower the static that would’ve occurred if set up any other way”. As part of setting the partnership table for success, it is also important to continuously monitor how others may perceive you. In reflecting on the matter, one private sector leader shared, “As a private sector player, we can approach partnerships better than we have in the past. Sometimes we show up polished to a fault, in a manner that’s almost condescending, and that inevitably posts up barriers, creating an even larger divide that doesn’t strategically invite our partners to the table.” Having each sector and individual continuously monitor their pre-existing assumptions and biases and maintain awareness over how each side presents itself in a partnership is critical to meaningfully engage and collaborate throughout a partnership.

Understanding business interests

Discussing partner interests in an open and honest manner at the initiation of a partnership

The public and private sectors should be bold and openly discuss the drivers that are bringing them to the partnership table. This helps to reduce misunderstandings, resentment or mistrust that would otherwise build over time, and enables the partnership to run more smoothly. While this may be uncomfortable, this will ultimately allow likeminded individuals and organizations to find one another and establish more meaningful partnerships to support the HIV/AIDS response. When reflecting on a previous experience with a public-sector partner that is accustomed to applying this approach, one private sector leader noted, “If they don’t believe we have a business interest, that’s now of concern because we run the risk of having our interests perceived as a loose philanthropy play that’s not grounded in our core priorities”. In this situation, taking this approach resulted in

a positive and effective partnership, one in which all actors felt comfortable being straightforward with their intentions upfront and throughout the partnership. This created a space for people to raise their concerns in real time, and resulted in a much higher willingness to work through conflicts and resolve these issues as partners.

However, declaring all business motives and intentions is easier in theory than in practice, particularly when working with public sector partners that may be unfamiliar with the corporate sector's ways of working. Spending time discussing who you are as individuals, what excites you about working together, and how you seek to contribute to the partnership overall can help to open the door to more honest conversations about motivations, thus allowing all partners to chart a path towards accomplishing their goals in an effective manner.

Understanding language

Investing time to speak in a language that resonates with all entities involved

In combination with being bold and frank enough to state business interests and motivators, it is equally important to ensure they're being stated in a way that everyone at the table can understand. The public and private sector often struggle to communicate their business case to one another due to differences in vernacular or the use of jargon. Spending additional time upfront to clarify language when discussing intent, capabilities, and measures of success can ensure effective communication and avoid misunderstandings throughout the partnership. Several private sector actors noted that it was especially important for the private sector to become more cognizant of this, as it is often more challenging for the public sector or civil society to make the case for engaging in a partnership based on their needs and the private sector's core competencies alone.

“We need to spend more time in workshops to establish a language that resonates with all parties. This will allow us all to better understand how to map challenges to our core areas of expertise, and how to apply these capabilities”.

Private sector leader

Today's challenges in global health require a combination of skillsets across multiple disciplines, including health financing, data science, healthcare delivery, supply chain, etc. Taking time to understand the vernacular within these disciplines is important if we seek to develop and implement transformational solutions that advance the HIV/AIDS response.

Managing risks

Creating consortiums for collective impact

Another way to strengthen the reputation of the private sector and help mitigate risk is to work together as a consortium with other industries and companies, creating partnerships comprised of more than two organizations. Working in a larger group can bring additional capabilities to the table, and further increase collaboration and innovation to generate impact. Additionally, having multiple partners involved can assuage concerns over having one company unfairly benefit from or monopolize a partnership. Multiple private sector leaders highlighted this as a key element in the future evolution of partnerships, noting how effective it's been in increasing transparency and working through issues.

“Building a consortium of companies can help all partners be more purposeful and come together in safe settings, allowing for honest debate and not just sanitized comments”.

Private sector leader

One such example is the Collaboration for HIV/AIDS Immunological Therapy (CHAIT), which was set up to develop immunological approaches to achieve a ‘functional cure’ with long-term control of the virus in the absence of antiretroviral therapy. The actors in this partnership include the Swiss Vaccine Research Institute, France’s Vaccine Research Institute, Boehringer Ingelheim, FIT Biotech, GlaxoSmithKline Vaccines, Sanofi Pasteur, and ViiV Healthcare. Having a multitude of partners engaged not only brings additional resources to the effort, but also encourages knowledge sharing among partners which is invaluable.

Empowering decision making

Engaging at the national and local levels

In order to ensure lasting impact of partnerships beyond the lifespan of pilots, we should consider it the continued role and responsibility of the public and private sectors to engage local governments and institutions. Both public and private sector actors expressed that all too often, partnerships and leadership engagement remain at the global level. When this occurs, it can be even more challenging to understand local cultures or ideologies pertaining to populations and regions of interest. This can also create a disconnect between the investments made at the global level, and the impact at the local level. Failure to take into account these differences and nuances can limit a partnership from living up to its potential impact, and may completely alter the long-term outcome of what, on paper, was considered a successful solution in the short-term.

When asked about what we should do differently to generate greater impact in the future, one private sector leader responded, “Overall, I think the future is in furthering the ability of national governments to support their citizens, and in considering the private sector as a contributor

22. <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/msm/index.html>

23. <https://ilga.org/maps-sexual-orientation-laws>

24. http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/20170720_Data_book_2017_en.pdf

of capabilities”. Particularly within MICs, there is a significant challenge in getting low cost antiretroviral drugs and diagnostics in the hands of the patients and healthcare providers that need them. Through innovative partnerships with the private sector, civil society, donors, and national governments, we could find ways to balance the needs and incentives of all parties, generating a more sustainable solution for all

Serving as a vocal advocate

Helping to enact change

Part of the challenge in engaging in a global health issue such as HIV/AIDS stems from the stigma and discrimination felt by the affected populations. Within the United States alone, gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men account for 70% of new HIV infections²². Across the world, there are still countries in which the LGBTQ community is ostracized, and homosexuality is considered illegal. According to the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), same-sex sexual contact is a criminal offense in a total of 72 countries²³. Additionally, in lower prevalence settings, the majority of HIV infections occur among key populations. Outside of sub-Saharan Africa, key populations and their sexual partners accounted for 80% of new HIV infections in 2015²⁴. Private sector companies have an immense opportunity to advocate for vulnerable populations in areas where they are at greatest risk, particularly equal opportunity employers who already have corporate values aligned to the cause. Doing so will strengthen relationships with key and vulnerable populations and may improve the perception of the private sector’s engagement in the HIV/AIDS response overall. The private sector also has an opportunity to leverage their brand and voice to influence governments to make investments to serve their population. Global HIV targets will only be met if all parties are at the table and recognize their shared responsibilities towards a fully funded and effective HIV/AIDS response.

Actively convening

Engaging in cross-sector forums on a continuous basis

While multiple international forums, conferences and conventions exist throughout the world, many of them continue to engage private and public sectors separately. When different sectors are invited to the table, there is a unique opportunity to engage in more integrated and unbiased discussions, where differences in opinions and perspectives can be fleshed out in real time. Using global events to convene multiple sectors under the same roof will help to continue building trust, generate advocates, and enable conversations where the voices of individuals and sectors can be heard, instead of assumed. Increased exposure to cross-sector dialogues can help identify shared goals for the greater good and break down the silos and barriers that are currently preventing effective and enduring engagement in global health partnerships that support the HIV/AIDS response.

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Re-evaluating the risk-reward spectrum

Evaluating the risk tolerance in partnership engagement

With so much left to be done to eradicate the HIV/AIDS epidemic, we are at a critical time to re-consider how the private sector should continue to be engaged. However, as private sector companies have shown interest in forming global health partnerships based on a combination of funding and capabilities, they have often faced criticism by those who perceive them to be negative contributors to global health through their business products or practices. Significant opportunity exists to accelerate the HIV/AIDS response through additional support from private sector companies. However, no private sector company's goals and practices are perfectly aligned with those of a public sector organization focused exclusively on social good.

“Companies, like governments, are not perfect. We’re fraught with issues. But we can’t say we want corporates to engage then crucify them for every practice that isn’t 100% perfect. We can’t have it both ways”.

Private sector leader

As such, the benefits of partnerships may only manifest with a greater tolerance for this misalignment. In light of the number of private sector actors currently engaged in the HIV/AIDS response, more unusual actors must be brought to the partnership table. This requires us all to be more open to working through existing challenges and barriers to engagement with the private sector.

4. Where do we go from here?

If we wish to ensure a fully funded and more effective response to HIV/AIDS, we need to increase engagement with the private sector. Current trends in health financing show that current levels of funding will not be sufficient to achieve global goals, and that new sources of funding for priority health areas like HIV/AIDS will not be met through traditional means, much less by one sector alone.

The private sector has played an important role since the beginning of the HIV/AIDS response and has an opportunity to continue leveraging their funding and core competencies to create impact by increasing access to medicines, promoting efficiency in health service delivery, and improving data monitoring and evaluation, among other invaluable ways. Prominent actors within the global health community are turning to the private sector, as there is a growing realization that the private sector can provide unique value and participate in roles that other sectors cannot.

In January 2018, Bill Gates noted that “There is a growing convergence between philanthropy and industry in developing solutions for diseases in rich countries as well as poor countries...if the goal is to get medicines and vaccines out to everybody who needs them, it is the industry that has the skills, experience, and capacity necessary to turn discoveries into commercially viable products²⁵”.

Given the capabilities, experience and financial resources of private sector companies, engaging in partnerships with the private sector has immense potential to achieve transformational improvements in the development, delivery, and quality of HIV treatment and care. However, given the barriers we see today, cross sectoral collaboration is likely to continue experiencing challenges in the short

term. As sectors learn more about each other over time and become more transparent about their respective motivations, incentives, assets, and ways of working, engaging with the private sector in support of the HIV/AIDS response will become easier. Ending AIDS by 2030 may be within reach, but only by discarding biases and overcoming past misconceptions will we be able to truly recognize the vital role the private sector must play to achieve the ambitious global HIV/AIDS targets.

“The global health community needs to engage the private sector more rather than less. And must do so more effectively than it has in the past²⁶”

Peter Sands,
Executive Director of the Global Fund

25. <https://www.gatesnotes.com/Health/Improving-Global-Health>

26. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(18\)30550-6/fulltext?code=lancet-site](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(18)30550-6/fulltext?code=lancet-site)

“Partnerships in unfamiliar territory”

Thursday 26 July, 18:00 – 19:30
Beurs van Berlage, Keurzaal
Damrak 243, 1012 ZJ Amsterdam

MODERATOR:

- Princess Mabel van Oranje, *Initiator and Chair, Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage*

PRESENTATION:

- Natasha Sunderji, *Global Health Lead, Accenture Development Partnerships*

PANEL:

Corporate Sector:

- Huma Abbasi, *General Manager, Global Health & Medical, Chevron*
- Carl Manlan, *Chief Operating Officer, Ecobank Foundation*
- Gregg Alton, *Executive Vice President, International Operations & Corporate Affairs, Gilead Sciences, Inc.*

Civil Society:

- Mike Podmore, *Executive Director, STOPAIDS UK*

Public Sector:

- Hans Docter, *Ambassador for Business and Development, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs*
- Lauren Marks, *Director Private Sector Engagement for PEPFAR, U.S. Department of State*

Private Foundations:

- Julia Greenberg, *Director of Governance and Financing, the Open Society Public Health Program, Open Society Foundations*

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