



Independent observer  
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## BILL AND MELINDA GATES SUPPORT THE FUND, AND SPEAK OUT ON AIDS ISSUES

Shortly before the International AIDS Conference took place in Toronto last month, the Gates Foundation announced that it would give \$500 million to the Global Fund over the years 2006-2010, at a rate of \$100 m. per year. This is a significant increase from the \$150 m. that the foundation gave over the four years 2002-2005.

On the opening night of the Toronto conference, Bill and Melinda Gates spoke of this gift, and also made a number of unusually forceful points about the fight against AIDS. Excerpts from their speech follow.

Bill Gates:

The Global Fund is active in 131 countries. It gets HIV drugs to more than half-a-million people. It provides access to testing and counseling to nearly 6 billion people. It offers basic care to more than half-a-million orphans. The Global Fund is one of the best and kindest things that people have ever done for one another. It is a fantastic vehicle for scaling up the treatment and preventative tools we have today to make sure they reach the people who need them. That is why last week our foundation announced a \$500 million grant to the Global Fund. We're honored to be part of their work.

The Global Fund is not the only dramatic advance in the world's efforts against AIDS. Shortly after the Global Fund's launch, President Bush promised \$15 billion over five years to fight AIDS, the largest single pledge ever made to fight a disease. There were a lot of skeptics at the time and a lot of them are probably here tonight, but today PEPFAR is supplying antiretroviral drugs to more than half-a-million people in 15 countries in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. The president's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief has done a great deal of good and President Bush and his team deserve a lot of credit for it...

Between 2003 and 2005 with the infusion of funds from PEPFAR and the Global Fund, the number of people in low- and middle-income countries receiving antiretroviral drugs increased by an average of 450,000 each year. Yet over the same period, the number of people who became infected with HIV average over 4 million a year. In other words, for each new person who got treatment for HIV, about 10 people became infected. Even during our greatest advance, we are falling behind...

Right now, one of the most widely practiced approaches to prevention is the ABC Program, or Abstain, Be faithful, use Condoms. This approach has saved many lives and we should expand it. But for many at the highest risk of infection, ABC has its limits. Abstinence is not often an option for poor women and girls who have no choice but to marry at an early age. Being faithful will not protect the woman whose partner is not faithful. Using condoms is not a decision that a woman can make by herself. It depends on a man... We need to put the power to prevent HIV in the hands of women.

So we need tools that will allow women to protect themselves. This is true whether the woman is the faithful, married mother of small children or a sex worker trying to scrape out a living in a slum. No matter where she lives, who she is or what she does, a woman should never need her partner's permission to save her own life. To be clear, as we discover and distribute preventative tools that women can use without a man's cooperation, we are not excusing men from their obligations to be responsible and to protect their partners. We're just reducing the consequences to women if they don't...

Melinda Gates:

In the fight against AIDS, condoms save lives. If you oppose the distribution of condoms, something is more important to you than saving lives. Some people believe that condoms encourage sexual activity, so they want to make them less available. But withholding condoms does not mean fewer people have sex, it means fewer people have safe sex and more people die.

When Bill and I visit other countries, we are often enthusiastically received and accompanied by government officials on all our stops, until we go to meet with sex workers. At that point, it can become politically too difficult for government officials to stay with us and often our hosts leave, and that is senseless. People involved in sex work are crucial allies in the fight to end AIDS...

If politicians need a more sympathetic image to make the point, they should think about saving the life of a faithful mother of four whose husband visits a sex worker. If a sex worker insists that her clients use condoms, that sex worker is going to help save the life of the mother of those four children. If you're turning your back on sex workers, you're turning your back on the faithful mother of four. So let's not turn our back on anyone.

[The full transcript of the speech is available at [www.kaisernetwork.org/health\\_cast/uploaded\\_files/Bill and Melinda Gates Opening Speeches.pdf](http://www.kaisernetwork.org/health_cast/uploaded_files/Bill_and_Melinda_Gates_Opening_Speeches.pdf).]

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