

Waking Up to Risk
*Corporate Responses to
HIV/AIDS in the Workplace*

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Acronyms

AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
AMSI	AIDS Management Standard Initiative
ART	antiretroviral therapy
AZT	azidothymidine
BHP	Broken Hill Proprietary Company (Australia)
BSR	Business for Social Responsibility
CEO	chief executive officer
CSR	corporate social responsibility
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
GBC	Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS
GHI	Global Health Initiative
GRI	Global Reporting Initiative
GSK	GlaxoSmithKline
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
HR	human resources
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOE	International Organisation of Employers
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
JSE	Johannesburg Securities Exchange
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
MTV	Music Television
NGLS	United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service
NGO	non-governmental organization
R&D	research and development
SABCOHA	South African Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS
SAMP	Southern African Migration Project
SHARP	Sasol HIV/AIDS Response Programme
STI	sexually transmitted infection
TB	tuberculosis
TNC	transnational corporation
TRIPS	Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNGASS	United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
URL	uniform resource locator
US	United States
VCT	voluntary counselling and testing
WEF	World Economic Forum
WHO	World Health Organization

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Summary/Résumé/Resumen

Summary

This paper looks at the response of large corporations to one of the most pressing developmental challenges facing countries in the global South today – HIV/AIDS. The paper presents results and analysis from the first global survey of transnational corporations' (TNCs) responses to the pandemic, as well as three surveys of large corporations in Brazil, the Philippines and South Africa, and case studies of selected corporations. The research was conducted by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) in partnership with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), in response to the request of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS) that data on the response of different sectors of society be generated and analysed.

The main analytical finding from this research is that the corporate sector is just beginning to wake up to the risks posed to business operations by HIV/AIDS and has still to awaken to its wider responsibilities, which arise from its influence over the conditions that encourage HIV/AIDS prevalence and undermine possibilities for mitigating its effects. Dialogue and action on the interface between business and HIV/AIDS has often focused on the business response to HIV/AIDS, rather than on the HIV/AIDS response to business. However, the United Nations Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS recognized that all actors must consider the wider social and economic conditions influencing HIV/AIDS prevalence and impact. Therefore the international policy community on HIV/AIDS must act to ensure more companies are not only “waking up to risk” but also “awakening to responsibility” for socioeconomic conditions that influence people at risk from, or living with, the virus.

The following key findings are discussed in the paper:

- Twenty-one per cent of the 100 largest TNCs reported that they have policies or programmes on HIV/AIDS in the workplace. That is 70 per cent of the respondents, although extrapolating this figure to include the non-respondents would be questionable, as companies without policies would be less likely to respond.
- Thirty-nine per cent of the websites of the 100 largest TNCs mentioned HIV/AIDS, but only 11 per cent had easily identifiable information specifically relating to workplace policies or programmes.
- In South Africa, 60 per cent of the 25 largest corporations reported that they have policies or programmes in the workplace. Eighty-one per cent of the responding companies have HIV/AIDS policies and programmes in their companies at both group and subsidiary level, while 13 per cent are in the process of taking such policies and programmes from their subsidiaries to group level.
- In Brazil, where the impacts of HIV/AIDS are less than South Africa, we find that fewer companies are taking action. Fifty-two per cent of the 25 largest companies reported having a workplace policy or programme on HIV/AIDS. This is 76 per cent of the responding companies. A further 12 per cent said they are developing policies and already have some level of prevention and support activities occurring in the work setting.
- In the Philippines, where HIV/AIDS prevalence is currently low, only 16 per cent of the 25 largest corporations have a workplace policy or programme on HIV/AIDS. This is 25 per cent of responding companies. The majority of respondents stated that they have no reason to have any policies or programmes.
- There is a wide variation in the specific HIV/AIDS prevention and mitigation components of these corporate policies and programmes, and the extent of coverage provided to employees and their dependents.
- Communities, suppliers and subcontractors are rarely covered by policies and programmes, even though most company respondents consider that HIV/AIDS –

and the risks it poses to their workplaces and other business operations – must be tackled beyond the workplace.

- Most companies do not consider how their normal operations and strategies affect poverty, and thus HIV/AIDS. This is despite the UN General Assembly Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, which emphasized the importance of poverty and unsustainable development for the spread and impact of HIV/AIDS.

The limited scope and scale of corporate action on HIV/AIDS suggests that enthusiasm within the United Nations system, bilateral and multilateral development organizations, and international NGOs, for the voluntary role that business is playing and can play in the fight against HIV/AIDS needs to be tempered with an awareness of the current lack of wholesale and comprehensive engagement on this matter by even the largest companies, and even in the most affected areas, such as South Africa.

However, one possible route forward emerges from the analysis, involving the financial community. The argument is made that HIV/AIDS may pose significant risks to current and future corporate financial performance, so that the financial community should increasingly be interested in whether the companies they invest in are attuned to that risk and managing it accordingly. Moreover, it is argued that this risk cannot be managed effectively by individual corporate action, but requires an economy-wide response. Therefore joint action from the financial community may help institutionalize corporate responses, while sensibly extending the risk management approach to include the risks to economies and societies as a whole.

Jem Bendell is a visiting fellow at Nottingham University Business School, and a consultant to non-governmental and international organizations on globalization and sustainable development. He has published many articles and two books on corporate responsibility, including the edited volume *Terms for Endearment: Business, NGOs and Sustainable Development* (Greenleaf Publishing, Sheffield, 2000). For more information, visit www.jembendell.com.

Résumé

Cette étude s'intéresse à ce que font les grandes sociétés face à l'un de ces obstacles au développement que les pays du Sud doivent surmonter d'urgence aujourd'hui: le VIH/sida. Elle présente les résultats de la première enquête mondiale menée sur les sociétés transnationales (STN) face à la pandémie, de trois enquêtes portant sur de grandes sociétés au Brésil, aux Philippines et en Afrique du Sud, ainsi que d'études de cas d'entreprises choisies, et analyse l'ensemble de ces données. Les recherches ont été effectuées par l'Institut de recherche des Nations Unies pour le développement social (UNRISD) en partenariat avec le Programme commun des Nations Unies sur le VIH/sida (ONUSIDA) en réponse à l'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies, qui, lors de sa session extraordinaire consacrée au VIH/sida en 2001, avait

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