

## Why we need an AIDS vaccine

There are two primary reasons why a preventive vaccine is needed if the HIV/AIDS epidemic is to be controlled. The first reason is the history of public health initiatives. Data from countries with ongoing HIV/AIDS prevention and/or treatment and care programmes demonstrate that these initiatives alone are not enough to control the epidemic. History suggests that with infectious disease epidemics, like smallpox, polio and now HIV/AIDS, only mass immunization programmes with an effective vaccine can yield truly effective results.

The second reason is economic. As the World Bank emphasizes, investment in cost-effective interventions that prevent transmission of communicable disease—specifically vaccines—is one of the best uses of scarce public funds. Antiretroviral treatment is highly expensive because current medicines, which are not cures, must be taken every day for life. A vaccine should be seen as part of a comprehensive HIV/AIDS agenda. In order to curb or stop the epidemic, both short-term and long-term solutions must be implemented. Short-term solutions include scaling up prevention campaigns, like education on safe sex, ensuring treatment of the millions already infected and mitigating the socio/economic impacts of the epidemic. The long-term solutions depend on new prevention methods, including a preventive HIV/AIDS vaccine.

IAVI estimates that the potential positive impact of AIDS vaccines would be enormous, especially in the developing world. Even in a relatively conservative scenario, an effective preventive HIV vaccine could prevent almost 30 million of the 150 million new infections projected in the coming decades. A highly effective vaccine could even prevent over 70 million infections in 15 years.<sup>i</sup>

*'The quest for a vaccine is the single most important quest in the world. If you want to end the pandemic definitively, conclusively, you need (a) vaccine.'*

Stephen Lewis, United Nations' special envoy for AIDS in Africa  
at the International AIDS Conference – Toronto, 15 August 2006

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<sup>i</sup> [IAVI, 2006. Estimating the Global Impact of an AIDS Vaccine](#) - IAVI Policy Brief