

Benin to receive further funding for AIDS project

The World Bank has approved credit funding to Benin for a second Multisectoral HIV and AIDS Project (PMLS-2), valued at \$35 million (approx R250 million).

The bank's Board of Executive Directors approved the funding, which is hoped will consolidate progress made under the preceding project, implemented from 2002 to 2006 at a cost of \$23 million (approx R164 million).

The objectives of the PMLS-2 are derived from Benin's new Strategic HIV and AIDS Control Plan for the 2006-2010 period, the World Bank said in a statement.

The project is to support Benin's efforts to implement the Strategic Plan by helping to expand and improve the coverage and use of prevention, treatment, and care services on the part of high-risk groups.

"With the World Bank's help, and particularly under the first Multisectoral HIV/AIDS Project, Benin has already made progress in controlling the epidemic, especially in the area of community mobilisation," said Nicolas Ahouissoussi, Senior Agricultural Economist and World Bank Task Team Leader.

Ahouissoussi said that substantial technical and financial assistance has been provided to civil society organizations in Benin, thereby enabling them to carry out AIDS prevention and treatment activities and provide anti-retroviral drugs to 2,000 patients.

"This new project, just approved by the Board of Directors, will further consolidate those achievements, and will bolster the Government's efforts to meet the multiple challenges of AIDS control, particularly where universal access to treatment is concerned," he said.

The PMLS-2 will help to enhance and expand the accessibility and use of preventive services by vulnerable groups, such as women and young people and by high-risk groups such as sex workers.

It further aims to enhance the accessibility and use of treatment and care services by those infected and/or affected by HIV and AIDS, particularly orphans and vulnerable children.

The project will also consolidate the coordination, management and monitoring and evaluation of the national response to HIV and AIDS, in order to ensure its sustainability.

The PMLS-2 is designed to be implemented over a four-year period, mainly in the form of sub-projects initiated by civil society organizations and through substantial support to activities under the National Program for Control of HIV/AIDS

(PNLS), as an adjunct to financing from the Global Fund (5th Round).

The Project has three main components namely:

- A social mobilisation component, which will finance HIV/AIDS prevention activities, particularly in the area of communication aimed at behavioral change;
- Access to treatment and care, which will enhance access by infected and affected persons to services including screening, treatment with anti-retroviral drugs, treatment of opportunistic infections, and prevention of mother-to-child transmission; and
- Coordination, management, monitoring and evaluation: project funds will provide the National HIV/AIDS Committee (CNLS) with adequate resources to play an effective coordinating role in HIV/AIDS prevention and to implement the unified national monitoring and evaluation system.

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