

## **Building the Path to the End of AIDS: How investments in HIV prevention research and development responded to the global economic downturn, new research results and funding trends 2000-2012**

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### **Background**

Since 2004, the HIV Vaccines and Microbicides Resource Tracking Working Group has employed a comprehensive methodology to track trends in research and development (R&D) investments and expenditures for biomedical HIV prevention options, including HIV vaccines, microbicides, PrEP, treatment as prevention and adult voluntary medical male circumcision.

### **Methods**

R&D data were collected on annual disbursements by public, private and philanthropic funders for product development, clinical trials and trial preparation, community education and policy advocacy efforts in order to estimate annual investment in HIV prevention R&D. Investment trends were assessed and compared by year, prevention technology type, funder category and geographic location.

### **Results**

Five years ago, the global financial downturn was expected to have a significant and devastating impact on financial investments in R&D for AIDS. Pressure mounted to divert funding away from longer-term research in finding an HIV vaccine and effective microbicide towards proven technologies. In spite of this, overall investments in HIV prevention R&D have not decreased significantly, but instead virtually flatlined. Even as budgets tightened and donor capacity waned, science forged ahead, releasing groundbreaking results from microbicides, treatment as prevention, PrEP and HIV vaccine trials. While the promising results of recent years revitalized interest in advancing HIV prevention science, the effects of the 2008 financial crisis continued to be felt in 2012, as philanthropies developed more targeted investment strategies and public agencies funded fewer grants. Preliminary results show overall funding increased slightly in 2012, although some large donors decreased their investments.

### **Conclusion**

In a financial climate with increasingly limited resources, tracking investment in HIV prevention R&D has continued to provide the field with vital information to chart the course forward, even in uncertain times. Monitoring funding trends better facilitates identification of promising areas where investment is needed, prioritization of research in those areas, assessment of the influence of public policies on funding trends and fact-based advocacy to support future research investments. As later-stage and follow-on trials advance, understanding and evaluating research in the volatile context of public, private and philanthropic funding is proving ever more important to ensuring progress down the path towards ending the AIDS pandemic.