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## HIV's economic liabilities are still unfolding

Sir, As the world marks World Aids Day in 2014, achievements so far should not cause complacency that HIV/Aids has been beaten. Clive Cookson (FT.com, December 2) rightly highlights recent research on HIV becoming weaker. However, HIV is still one of the biggest killers in Africa, causing 1.1m deaths in 2013, or 3,013 deaths per day. Ebola deaths, so far, are still far lower than HIV-related deaths.

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What also needs to be better appreciated is the economics of HIV in terms of the size of the future life cycle financial liability for affected countries and donor community. Such financial commitments need moral fortification from a duty of rescue principle from policy makers and donors. The future liability of HIV treatment and prevention is easily three times higher than what is currently being spent. Looking at Africa, the liability over the next 35 years is closer to \$800bn, on the back of universal coverage and duty of rescue. This is a "quasi-national debt" for the affected countries which has not yet been acknowledged and factored in, and has implications for fiscal sustainability.

There is an imperative to think of strategies for innovative finance, such as social impact bonds and tax on mobile phone usage. Equally, new fiscal space should be sought, especially from revenues from natural resource discoveries in Africa and efficiency gains from the health sector at large. HIV intervention platforms should also be used as an opportunity for strengthening the entire healthcare delivery system on comorbidities such as cardiovascular diseases, TB and hypertension.

While medically HIV may seem to have been tamed, its economic liabilities over the next 35 years are enormous and still unfolding. It is a ticking financial time bomb!

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