

**New comprehensive HIV/AIDS therapy programs in Swaziland:
A joint project by the Swiss Red Cross and the Business Humanitarian Forum**

PRESS RELEASE

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The Swiss Red Cross (SRC) and the Business Humanitarian Forum (BHF), a Geneva-based non-profit association that encourages private sector support for humanitarian work, today renewed their partnership agreement dedicated to fighting HIV/AIDS in Swaziland. Thanks to a grant from the Oak Foundation in Geneva the project to upgrade the Mahwalala Clinic in Swaziland can now be completed.

The overall goal of the cooperation is to reduce HIV/AIDS transmissions and to mitigate the impact on the infected and affected individuals, families and communities as well as the prevention of HIV/AIDS infection.

Swaziland currently has the world's highest HIV/AIDS infection rate. The government's health care capacity is totally insufficient and the few existing hospitals are mostly concentrated in urban areas. More than 80% of hospitalisations are now due to HIV related illnesses. Although HIV/AIDS medicines are available in Swaziland, action to increase the number of health care facilities that are equipped to administer these therapies is one of the country's most pressing needs. The cooperation between the SRC and the BHF addresses this fundamental problem by upgrading and equipping existing clinics in the country.

Thanks to financial contributions from the private sector and a grant from the OAK Foundation, the semi-rural Mahwalala Clinic in Swaziland can now be renovated and refurbished. Once this work will be completed early next year, the Clinic will be integrated into the national Swazi health care system and thus become eligible to receive cost-free HIV/AIDS Antiretroviral medicines through The Global Fund to fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

This Clinic will be able to provide Antiretroviral therapy for an estimated 500 people per year and voluntary counseling and testing for about 1'500 people.

This project represents a concrete and successful model for fighting HIV/AIDS in Africa.

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