Setting Priorities for HIV/AIDS Interventions
A Cost–Benefit Approach

Robert J. Brent, Professor of Economics, Fordham University, US

‘Professor Brent’s book is a superlative addition to the HIV/AIDS policy literature. Both non-specialists and specialists in policy evaluation will benefit from the lucid exposition of cost–benefit analysis (CBA) methods applied to the most critical and far-reaching problem that challenges social institutions and individual behavior. Essentially, Professor Brent has taken his vast experience in cost–benefit analysis, and on the ground African research, to apply CBA in a compelling and insightful manner. This book re-examines HIV/AIDS policy in Sub-Saharan countries where the devastation is an infection tsunami... Finding what actually works may be difficult, but Professor Brent argues persuasively that using a CBA framework is the best approach.’

– William S. Cartwright, George Mason University, US

HIV/AIDS is much too complex a phenomenon to be understood only by reference to common sense and ethical codes. This book presents the cost–benefit analysis (CBA) framework in a well-researched and accessible manner to ensure that the most important considerations are recognized and incorporated.

This book argues that HIV/AIDS policies need to be evidence based and that CBA is the best way to assemble and summarize the evidence. The work explains why CBA is needed and highlights a number of myths, misinformation and counterintuitive results in the field, and critiques the Millennium Development Goals approach. It also presents HIV/AIDS as a hunger issue in sub-Saharan Africa and as a sexual transmission problem in the US. The roles of nutrition, income, education, religion, agricultural policy, concurrency and sexual networks are all examined. Robert Brent explains the main cost–benefit methods and applications, including threshold analysis, willingness to pay, cost minimization, cost-effectiveness, human capital theory and the value of a statistical life. Applications cover female education, possible vaccines, condoms, and various forms of treatment. He concludes by explaining how CBA incorporates social considerations such as equity.

With timely and controversial discussions, this book will be read with interest by AIDS activists, NGO members, policy-makers and public officials, as well as being accessible to non-economists interested in the subject of HIV/AIDS.


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A Cost–Benefit Approach

Robert J. Brent

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