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The global response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which has already infected more than 50 million people, has been inadequate, particularly in the developing world. In many countries, blood screening was delayed, partly because of the initial misconception that HIV rarely causes AIDS. The importance of heterosexual intercourse and breastfeeding in HIV transmission was downplayed for years. Patchy surveillance has frustrated efforts to predict the course of the epidemic, and cohort studies, essential for good epidemiology, are rare in developing countries. Nevertheless, there have been successes. One of the main, largely unsung, achievements is that interventions have been developed that have the capability to reduce HIV incidence and relevant risky behaviors by up to 80%. Unfortunately, these interventions have in general not been implemented at a wide enough scale to have significant impact.