former United States president George W. Bush is expected to visit Botswana next Thursday on an official trip to launch an expanded cancer treatment programme related to women’s health.

The US Embassy in Gaborone said this week that Bush will announce a P21 million project in Botswana to scale up an innovative programme that will dramatically decrease the time needed for examination, diagnosis and treatment of cervical cancer. The launch of the project to be codenamed ‘See and Treat’ is expected to take place at Princess Marina Referral Hospital in Gaborone on July 5, the statement said.

“See and Treat” programme, which includes visual examination and, if necessary, immediate treatment, was initiated by the Ministry of Health with US government support in 2009. This programme is distinct from the more common cervical cytology procedure, otherwise known as a pap smear, which involves more extensive laboratory work that frequently results in “delays in diagnosis and difficulty in follow-up with patients who require treatment,” the statement said. Funded by the American people through the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and supported by the Pink Ribbon-Red Ribbon partnership, which includes many public and private sector organisations, this new effort will expand and maximize the impact of the “See and Treat” programme for cervical cancer. According to the Ministry of Health, cervical cancer is the second most common cancer in Botswana and it is the leading cause of cancer-related deaths for women.