



Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

UNAIDS

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Coordination of National Responses to HIV/AIDS

Guiding principles for national authorities and their partners

Introduction

At the International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA), held in Nairobi, Kenya, in September 2003, officials from national coordinating bodies and relevant ministries of African nations, major funding mechanisms, multilateral and bilateral agencies, NGOs and the private sector gathered to review principles for national-level coordination of the HIV/AIDS response.

A set of guiding principles were identified through a preparatory process at global and country levels, initiated by UNAIDS in cooperation with the World Bank and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

During the consultation, various opportunities and challenges presented by the growing diversity of funding mechanisms, and the importance of partnerships for HIV/AIDS-related action were noted. Participants underlined the need to further clarify roles and relationships in this diversity, the urgency of local action and the need for an enabling policy environment.

Strong consensus was achieved on three principles that must be acknowledged by all stakeholders in the country-level HIV/AIDS response:

- **One agreed HIV/AIDS Action Framework** that drives alignment of all partners.
- **One national AIDS authority**, with a broad-based multisectoral mandate.
- **One agreed country-level monitoring and evaluation system.**

While no standardized blueprint or prescription is applicable, the three principles are offered to countries as a basis for optimizing roles and relationships in an effort to speed up action and make efficient and effective use of resources. Using these three pillars as the overall focus, a variety of ways can be used to bring together self-coordinating entities, partnerships and funding mechanisms for concerted action.

Key Principle I

One agreed HIV/AIDS Action Framework that drives alignment of all partners

An agreed, common HIV/AIDS Action Framework is a basic element for mutual accountability across partnerships and funding mechanisms, and for the effective functioning of a national AIDS authority. Such a framework requires:

- **clear priorities** as the basis for resource allocation and accountability, making it possible to link priorities, resource flows and outcomes/results;
- systems for regular **joint reviews and consultation** on progress, which include all partners;
- **negotiated commitment** from external support agencies to align within the Action Framework processes;
- **linkages** between the HIV/AIDS Action Framework and poverty-reduction and development frameworks, as well as associated partnership arrangements; and
- **affirmation and optimization** of the growing drive to engage civil society organizations and the private sector in service delivery. Key principles to guide this development include:
 - mechanisms to deal with distribution of skilled human resources, including standards, code of conduct and incentive systems in relation to public service policies, etc.
 - measures to retain adequate capacity in the public sector.
 - provision of treatment and care through public and private providers, NGOs and community-based organizations with attention to equity and ethical standards, continuity in service delivery and capacity in public regulatory and quality-assurance functions (preferably through joint supervision of public and non-public services).
 - specific attention to rationalizing drug procurement in order to ensure lowest pricing, assured quality and continuity in supply.
 - agreed standards for behavioural change and communication messages.

Key Principle II

One national authority for HIV/AIDS with a broad-based multisectoral mandate at overall policy/coordination level

Formal mandate

A national AIDS authority requires a legal status and a formal mandate that will:

- define the degree of autonomy;
- specify formal reporting lines (information and policy instruction) to government at ministerial and administrative levels with clarity in delegated authority *vis-à-vis* ministerial and cabinet mandates; and
- spell out areas of accountability in terms of policy implementation, partner inclusion and programme/development outcomes.

Democratic oversight

A national AIDS authority must have a defined relationship to Parliament to enable democratic oversight that includes:

- systems of regular reporting and data input; and
- mechanisms for involving democratically elected bodies, including at local level.

Empowerment to exercise national ownership

A national authority must have a clearly defined role that includes the following 'custodian functions' for the National HIV/AIDS Action Framework:

- Development, negotiation, monitoring and evaluation of the National HIV/AIDS Action Framework.
- Oversight and coordination of the implementation of the national HIV/AIDS Action Framework.
- Coordination of the allocation of resources according to agreed national priorities, while leaving financial management and implementation to other entities.
- A national government budget allocation for core expenditures for the operations of the national authority.

Serving 'umbrella functions' for different partnerships and funding mechanisms

National AIDS authorities must be recognized as the overarching coordinating body and policy leader by both partners and funding mechanisms within the HIV/AIDS Action Framework. Key principles to enable national authorities in their broad 'umbrella functions' include the following:

- The national AIDS authority must demonstrate credibility in its commitment to broad inclusion and participation.
- Each of the partners must accept and respect the National HIV/AIDS Action Framework and the mandate of the national AIDS authority as a platform for concerted action.
- Partners must have adequate organizational independence to serve their own mandate, without compromising in-country mutual accountability.

- No partnership or funding mechanism will seek privileged ownership of the national AIDS authority.
- Stakeholders of the National HIV/AIDS Action Framework will participate within a common framework for monitoring and evaluation and will be responsive to mutually-agreed fiduciary arrangements and reporting requirements.

Facilitating national HIV/AIDS partnership arrangements

In many countries, there is a growing need for a broader, formal, common arena and/or organizing mechanism, operating between the policy and umbrella functions of the national AIDS authority and the actual implementation of the HIV/AIDS Action Framework. Such an arena should:

- be accessible to all, and bring together different partners and entities;
- be broad-based and inclusive;
- be convened and chaired by the national AIDS authority;
- have functions that include the following:
 - a driving force for expanding the response, which includes a dynamic vision that adapts to change.
 - information-sharing and dialogue on progress/constraints.
 - regular peer review, making the best possible use of technical input from various partners and reinforcing overall monitoring and evaluation of the AIDS response.
 - building trust and alignment across partnerships and assisting in the harmonization of procedures and systems.
 - identifying gaps and maintaining dialogue on issues of stigma, discrimination and human rights within an enabling environment.
 - strengthening the linkages between the UNGASS response and the development efforts related to poverty-reduction programmes and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
 - anticipating, accommodating and guiding existing and emerging funding initiatives and mechanisms (such as the Global Fund, World Bank MAP, foundations and bilaterals).

An enabling global and national environment

- At the global level, commitment of governments both rich and poor and the compassion of civil society and the private sector are essential to our success.
- At the level of afflicted nations and stricken communities, good governance, law and order, freedom of speech and association create the environment that enables the whole of society to rise to the challenge of the pandemic.

KEY PRINCIPLE III

One agreed M&E framework for overall national monitoring and evaluation

While numerous monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems exist, and a set of indicators linked to the UNGASS Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS is available with buy-in from key agencies, no functional 'best practice' model for the monitoring and evaluation of countrywide responses has yet been universally accepted. The absence of a common operational M&E framework in most countries has crippled efforts to increase capacity for quality assurance, national oversight and adequate use of M&E for policy adaptation.

As a result of the current lack of capacity, data are often lacking or of poor quality, which constrains the monitoring of performance and formulation of evidence-based policies. Countries are not clear on their M&E needs, and donors are often not clear on M&E investment priorities. Principles to forge stronger national M&E frameworks include:

Global-level alignment

- Commitment should be made by partners at global level to align their basic needs for M&E for the purpose of accountability for funds, and agree on core elements of a country-level M&E system that can address these needs.

Core national system linked to the National HIV/AIDS Action Framework

- Each National HIV/AIDS Action Framework should be accompanied by a core system for monitoring progress, including progress towards the realization of UNGASS and MDG goals, under the leadership of the national AIDS authority.

Agreed investment strategies for data quality control

- National-level stakeholders within the National HIV/AIDS Action Framework should make assessments of existing M&E systems a priority. Stakeholders should agree on how systems can be improved and how a shared core system can be established to provide high-quality data for analysing country performance.

Investment in national capacity

- National governments, AIDS authorities and the associated development partnerships must make the case for investing in essential capacity-building to meet national M&E needs.