

“Three Ones” key principles

“Coordination of National Responses to HIV/AIDS”

Guiding principles for national authorities and their partners

Introduction

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is a genuine global emergency taking the lives of eight thousand people a day and threatening the lives of tens of millions more as the infection continues to spread around the world.

New but still limited resources to respond to the needs of people living with HIV and AIDS and those at risk of infection will be utilized most efficiently if there is maximum coordination within the international community. To leverage resources and have the maximum impact on the global response to AIDS, all parties should strive to target their programmes on the priority needs of affected countries, seeking to avoid duplication of effort.

ICASA Meeting and Follow Up

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 for a consultation to review principles for national-level coordination of the HIV/AIDS response.

The 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 and have been further refined in dialogue with other key donor partners.

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

There was strong consensus on three principles applicable to all stakeholders in the country-level HIV/AIDS response:

- **One** agreed HIV/AIDS Action Framework that provides the basis for coordinating the work of all partners.
- **One** National AIDS Coordinating Authority, with a broad based multi-sector mandate.
- **One** agreed country level Monitoring and Evaluation System.

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.

While no standardized blueprint or prescription is applicable, there was consensus on a number of key guiding principles for national authorities and their partners. These principles are offered to countries as a basis for optimizing roles and relationships in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

KEY PRINCIPLE I

One agreed HIV/AIDS Action Framework that forms the basis for coordinating the work of all partners

An agreed, common HIV/AIDS Action Framework is a basic element for coordination across partnerships and funding mechanisms, and for the effective functioning of a National AIDS Coordinating Authority. Such a framework calls for:

Priorities

- Clear priorities for resource allocation and accountability, making it possible to link priorities, resource flows and outcomes/results.

Reviews and consultation

- Systems for regular joint reviews and consultation on progress that include all partners.

Commitment to Coordinate

- External support agencies commit themselves to coordinate within the Action Framework consistent with their own mandates.

Linkages

- Recognizing the connections between the HIV/AIDS Action Framework and poverty-reduction and development frameworks, as well as associated partnership arrangements.

A framework for managing the public/private partnership in service delivery

- Affirming and optimizing the growing drive to engage civil society organizations and the private sector in service delivery.

KEY PRINCIPLE II

One National AIDS Coordinating Authority with a broad based multi-sector mandate.

Formal mandate:

A National AIDS Coordinating Authority requires legal status and a formal mandate that will:

- define the degree of autonomy;
- specify formal reporting lines (information and policy instruction) to Government authorities at ministerial and administrative levels; and
- spell out areas of accountability in terms of policy implementation, partner inclusion and programme/development outcomes.

Democratic oversight:

A National Authority should have a relationship to legislative authorities to enable democratic oversight, including regular information sharing and reporting.

Empowerment to exercise national ownership:

A National Authority must have a clearly defined role that includes “custodian functions” for the National HIV/AIDS Action Framework:

- developing, negotiating, monitoring and evaluating the National HIV/AIDS Action Framework;
- serving as a focus for coordinating implementation of the national HIV/AIDS Action Framework;
- coordinating requests for resources according to agreed national priorities, while leaving financial management and implementation to other entities; and
- national government budget support for core expenditures for the operations of the authority.

Serving “umbrella functions” for different partnerships and funding mechanisms :

A National AIDS Coordinating Authority needs to work in such a way that partners and funding mechanisms within the HIV/AIDS Action Framework accept their leading role and functions. Key principles to enable national authorities to achieve this goal include:

- National authorities must demonstrate their credibility by committing to broad inclusion and participation, including full membership by civil society, non-governmental organizations, community-based groups, people living with AIDS, and the inclusion of international cooperating partners.
 - Each of these partners in turn accepts and respects the National HIV/AIDS Action Framework and the role of National AIDS Coordinating Authority as the basis for cooperation that will enhance rather than constrain their efforts.
- Partners can be assured of the organizational independence to serve their own mandate.
 - No partnership or funding mechanism seeks privileged ownership of the National AIDS Coordinating Authority.
 - Stakeholders of the National HIV/AIDS Action Framework participate within a common framework for monitoring and evaluation and cooperate to ensure accountability.

Enabling 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 Coordinating Authority and the actual implementation of the HIV/AIDS Action Framework. Such arena should be accessible to all as well as broad-based and inclusive. The functions of such arrangements may include encouraging leadership, providing vision for expanding the national responses, information sharing, assisting in harmonizing procedures and systems, and guiding existing and emerging funding mechanisms.

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 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 most effectively to the challenge of the pandemic.

KEY PRINCIPLE III

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

While multiple systems exist, and a set of indicators linked to the UNGASS Declaration on commitment on AIDS are available with buy in from key agencies, no functional “best practice” model for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) for country-wide responses has yet to be accepted.

The absence of an operational common M&E framework in most countries has hampered 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 is often lacking or of poor quality, which constrains the monitoring of performance and formulation of evidence-based policies. Countries may not be clear on their M&E needs, and donors may not be 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 make every effort to align their need for M&E to ensure accountability for funds and programme development based on results, as well as agreement 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 towards controlling the epidemic under the leadership of the National AIDS Coordinating Authority.

Agreed investment strategies for data quality

- National-level stakeholders within the 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 that provides high-quality data for analyzing country performance.

Investment in national capacity

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