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15-17 December 2008

Gender-sensitivity of AIDS responses

Additional documents for this item: *none*

Action required at this meeting - the Programme Coordinating Board is invited to:
document is a progress report and is for information only, therefore, the Programme Coordinating Board is invited to note the content of the document.

Cost implications for decisions: *none*

Overview

1. At its 22nd meeting in April 2008, the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board called on UNAIDS to “*develop specific tools to assist countries in planning, programming and implementing interventions in the context of HIV that address (1) women, girls and gender inequality, and (2) men who have sex with men, transgender, bisexual and lesbian populations.*” The Programme Coordinating Board further called on UNAIDS to intensify action to address gender inequalities and harmful gender-based practices in the context of HIV interventions, including by initiating country pilots. It requested UNAIDS to use expert group(s) to provide advice to this process, and “*to report back on progress on these actions at the 23rd meeting of the Programme Coordinating Board.*”
2. In the six months since the 22nd Programme Coordinating Board Meeting, the UNAIDS Cosponsors and the Secretariat have made significant progress in planning and launching two distinct but interrelated streams of work in response to the Board decision. The first stream focuses on women, girls and gender inequality, and the second focuses on men who have sex with men and transgender persons. These processes are informing and influencing one other, and issues relating to the role of men and boys, lesbians and bisexual women are integrated into each stream as appropriate. This approach of parallel but interrelated streams of work is also consistent with that of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria,¹ which will help ensure complementary support to Global Fund proposals and projects. As the lead UNAIDS Cosponsor on human rights, gender and AIDS (including men who have sex with men and transgender persons), UNDP has been facilitating both interagency processes, in close collaboration with the UNAIDS Secretariat, Cosponsors and UNIFEM. All UNAIDS Cosponsors, the Secretariat and UNIFEM are simultaneously continuing and enhancing their individual programme efforts in addressing gender dimensions of AIDS.

I. Addressing women, girls, gender inequality and HIV

a. Building on current activities and lessons learned

3. It is essential that intensified action to address women, girls, gender inequality and HIV build on existing activities and leadership both within and beyond the UN family, as well as be informed by lessons from other gender-focused efforts. An important step in follow-up to the Programme Coordinating Board decision was to conduct a mapping and analysis of relevant UNAIDS activities and accomplishments relating to women, girls and gender inequality. This mapping process is ongoing, and is expected to be completed by the end of 2008.
4. The first round of data collection for the mapping prioritized the documentation of regional and global efforts by UNAIDS Cosponsors, the Secretariat and UNIFEM, in order to shape and inform follow-up on the Board decision. A number of important country level initiatives have also been highlighted through this process. Examples of ongoing activities addressing

¹ At the 16th Global Fund meeting in November 2007, the Global Fund board recognized “the importance of addressing gender issues, with a particular focus on the vulnerabilities of women and girls and sexual minorities, in the fight against the three diseases, more substantially into the Global Fund’s policies and operations,” and called for the development of a gender strategy and encouragement of applicants to submit “proposals that address gender issues, with a particular reference to the vulnerabilities of women and girls and sexual minorities.” Subsequently, the Global Fund Secretariat (in consultation the UNAIDS family) has been developing two action strategies in response to this broad mandate, one addressing women and girls and the other sexual minorities.

women, girls, gender inequality and HIV are included in Annex A of this report, while a more comprehensive document will be made available separately.

b. Consultation, coordination and expert advice

5. Following from the 22nd Programme Coordinating Board, two working groups have been established to inform development and coordination of initiatives focusing on women, girls, gender inequality and HIV.
6. A *technical advisory group* has been established with 27 gender and HIV experts, to review and provide feedback on key documents at different stages of project roll-out. The group includes geographically diverse representation with a range of experience in HIV and gender policy, programming and research. The technical advisory group has already provided detailed feedback on two different project design documents.
7. In addition to the technical advisory group of external experts, an *interagency coordination group* has been established, with representation from UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNIFEM, WHO and the UNAIDS Secretariat. This interagency group is working to coordinate and promote action on gender and HIV by Cosponsors, UNIFEM and the UNAIDS Secretariat, promote mutual accountability, and harmonize inter-agency efforts to increase attention to gender in national AIDS responses.

c. Intensifying action and strengthening capacity

8. The working groups described above have developed and agreed on three parallel and mutually reinforcing strategies to intensify country level action on gender and HIV toward a more effective AIDS response and to strengthen capacity for quality assurance and scale-up.
9. First, the most important of these strategies is the ***provision of technical support and policy advice on gender and HIV to individual countries***, according to their needs and circumstances. In addition to country activities already underway (some examples are provided in Annex A), it has been agreed that the Programme Acceleration Funds mechanism will be used to encourage and support joint country-level programming to accelerate and promote gender-focused action in HIV efforts.²
10. Complementing these broad efforts in a large number of countries, efforts are underway to identify and work with eight to ten individual countries to support ***capacity development for national partners*** to implement gender equality priorities in the HIV response, and to ***ensure extensive process documentation and evaluation***. This will not only help promote high quality work in the countries in question, but will ensure that regionally influential countries can serve as key resources in South-South cooperation efforts. Initiatives to convene global and regional partners and documentation of country processes – particularly of good practices and approaches -- will facilitate wider sharing of lessons learned. Such an approach has already been agreed with colleagues in India, and discussions are underway with several countries in Africa and one in Latin America. Further roll-out of these approaches will continue in 2009.

² Utilizing extra-budgetary resources contributed specifically for this purpose to UNAIDS.

11. The second strategy focuses on **strengthening capacity to provide technical support, advisory services and knowledge products related to women, girls, gender inequality and HIV.**³ On the basis of advisory group feedback to the first project design, the coordination group has prioritized a regional process of capacity strengthening initiatives, in order to ensure that strong and consistent technical support is available to countries from regional providers. Strengthening of regional technical support mechanisms will take place hand-in-hand with an increase in funds to support catalytic country efforts focusing on gender and HIV through the Programme Acceleration Funds mechanism. To date, three activities have been designed and are in the process of being launched:

- **Strengthening the capacity** of regional and multi-country technical support mechanisms to provide high quality gender and HIV related assistance to countries. A range of mechanisms are being considered, such as WHO “knowledge hubs”, UNAIDS Technical Support Facilities, NGO consortia and networks, universities, regional intergovernmental mechanisms and regional AIDS programmes. As background, a brief evaluation of the extent to which existing mechanisms have addressed gender issues will be conducted.
- **Creating and disseminating a compendium** of resources that consolidates, synthesizes and summarizes the most effective and accessible tools, materials and assessments on integrating gender into national AIDS strategies. The compendium will be geared toward use by regional providers of technical assistance as well as country level actors.
- **Producing a brief and succinct user-friendly roadmap** geared toward decision-makers and key implementers providing direction on the core elements required to ensure that gender issues are well integrated into HIV programming approaches. The roadmap will describe how to use select resources and technical support mechanisms to achieve a more gender-sensitive response.

12. The third strategy for intensifying country action and strengthening capacity is focused on **building the commitment and leadership of UNAIDS structures and staff.** A series of country and regional briefings have been initiated for UNAIDS staff (Cosponsors and Secretariat). Briefings have been delivered in India and Panama, and additional briefings are scheduled for Southern Africa, Europe and the CIS, and the Russian Federation. These briefings provide background on the PCB decisions relating to gender, an overview of core elements that are essential for integrating gender (including women and girls, and men who have sex with men/transgender populations) into national AIDS responses, as well as next steps in the interagency process to build regional technical support capacity and to assist countries in addressing gender inequality as a key driver of the epidemic.

³ Tentative proposed timeline: **November 2008 – November 2009: Strengthening the capacity of regional or multi-country technical support mechanisms:** *criteria developed; open request for proposals (clearly indicating the link of how the strengthened regional mechanism will be better able to support country efforts) disseminated; 6-8 regional mechanisms selected in at least 4 regions; process monitored and evaluated.* **November 2008 – June 2009: Creating and disseminating a compendium of resources:** *existing materials reviewed and core documents selected; annotations drafted and reviewed (including reviews by sample regional technical support mechanisms); draft compendium finalized and field-tested; evaluations of compendium and its use solicited analyzed; compendium revised.* **December 2008– March 2009: Producing a brief and succinct user-friendly roadmap:** *existing materials reviewed, extracted and summarized; draft roadmap tested with select users; draft roadmap revised and field-tested; evaluation of roadmap solicited and analyzed; roadmap finalized and disseminated.*

II. Addressing HIV among men who have sex with men, transgender, bisexual and lesbian populations

a. Building on current activities and lessons learned

13. In parallel to the assessment of activities related to women, girls, gender inequality and HIV, a survey was conducted in September 2008 focusing on identifying relevant UNAIDS family activities on HIV, men who have sex with men and transgender persons.⁴ A wide variety of activities were detailed by the UNAIDS Cosponsors and the Secretariat. In comparison to work focusing on women, girls and gender inequality, the range and scope of efforts on men who have sex with men and transgender persons is more limited – both in terms of the type of activity and country, regional and global coverage. While current and anticipated activities provide a reasonable basis upon which to build, there is clearly a need for an enhanced framework, accelerated action, and intensified support to countries to develop and scale up targeted and integrated interventions.
14. Examples of ongoing activities addressing men who have sex with men, transgender persons and HIV are included in Annex B of this report, and a more extensive analysis will be made available separately.

b. Consultation, coordination and expert advice

15. To scale-up and intensify UNAIDS action, UNDP was designated lead agency on men who have sex with men and transgender persons in April 2008, in the context of the organization's lead role on human rights and gender. UNDP is collaborating closely with several main partners in advancing this work, including the UNAIDS Secretariat, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNODC and WHO. One of the first steps taken by Cosponsors and the Secretariat was to establish an interagency working group to coordinate action and to develop an enhanced UNAIDS framework for a broader and strengthened response to HIV and men who have sex with men and transgender persons.
16. As part of the process of developing an interagency strategy to address HIV and men who have sex with men and transgender persons, several consultations and meetings have been held with key partners, including governments and civil society. These have ranged from global and regional consultations such as the WHO-sponsored *regional consultation on men who have sex with men and HIV in Europe*, held in May 2008 with support from the UNAIDS Secretariat and UNDP; to sector-specific consultations, such as the WHO, UNAIDS Secretariat and UNDP *global consultation on men who have sex with men and transgender persons, HIV and the health sector*, held in September 2008. Informal consultations have also been organized with various sectors of civil society. For example, UNDP held a consultation with members of the Board of the Asia Pacific Coalition of Men who have sex with Men in April 2008 in Bangkok, as well as a meeting with representatives of lesbian rights groups from Zimbabwe and Palestine/Israel in September 2008 in New York.

⁴ In analyzing the information contained in the mapping, agreement was made to refrain from listing individual Cosponsors. We have therefore provided an overview of the results of the mapping, along with a sample of global, regional and country-based activities.

c. Intensifying action and strengthening capacity

17. Analysis of the mapping of Cosponsor and Secretariat activities reveals a diverse UN response to men who have sex with men, transgender persons and HIV issues. Nevertheless, the overall results achieved have not yet reached the scope and scale necessary to reduce rates of infection and improve services for men who have sex with men and transgender persons. While a number of highly successful UNAIDS initiatives have been undertaken and supported, they have yet to be well integrated into agencies' overall HIV strategies.
18. Each Cosponsor and the UNAIDS Secretariat is playing an important role in increasing support to communities and countries in responding to HIV among men who have sex with men and transgender persons. UNDP has been moving quickly since April 2008 to respond to its new responsibilities as the lead agency. For example:
- Two dedicated staff positions focusing on men who have sex with men, transgender persons and HIV have been created: a regional Programme Specialist based in Bangkok, and a Policy Advisor based in New York. Recruitment for these posts is currently underway;
 - Efforts have been made to raise the visibility and advocacy of groups working on issues relating to men who have sex with men, transgender persons and HIV, including through the Red Ribbon Award initiative which provides recognition for community leadership on AIDS, as well as a platform for policy dialogue and cross-community learning;
 - Several initiatives to integrate programming on men who have sex with men into Global Fund round 9 proposal development have been supported;
 - An internal 'request for proposals' has been issued to UNDP country offices to encourage strengthened engagement in this new mandate, as well as increased action through Joint UN Teams on AIDS;
 - Input has been provided to guidance materials for Global Fund proposals, including the on-line toolkit addressing men who have sex with men and transgender persons.
19. As noted above, an interagency working group has been working to develop a **framework for an enhanced UN response to men who have sex with men, transgender persons and HIV**. A three-day working session in October 2008 brought together representatives from UNDP, the UNAIDS Secretariat, UNESCO, UNODC, UNFPA and WHO, to finalize a framework document to guide a broader and better UN response. The framework is built on three principles: 1) Actions must be grounded in an understanding of and commitment to human rights; 2) Action must be informed by evidence; and 3) Action is required by a broad range of partners, simultaneously addressing short and long term needs and opportunities.

III. Summary

20. The activities documented in this report demonstrate renewed interagency energy and commitment in response to the PCB decision of April 2008 – directed toward expanding and intensifying action for women, girls and gender inequality, as well as for men who have sex with men and transgender persons. This intensified action will help to support efforts towards the goal of Universal Access by 2010 and the Millennium Development Goals' promise of halting and beginning to reverse the spread of HIV by 2015, by generating a more effective AIDS response that fully integrates the gender dimensions of the epidemic in HIV prevention, treatment, and care and support efforts.

ANNEX A

Addressing women, girls, gender inequality and HIV

In September 2008, UNDP, on behalf of the interagency coordination group, put out a call to all Cosponsors, the Secretariat and UNIFEM to provide an update on respective gender-related activities, building on a draft mapping of gender and human rights activities conducted by UNDP in December 2007.⁵ Responses showed a diverse coverage at the global, regional and country level, encompassing a wide range of gender specific issues. A small sample of global, regional and country programming is presented below:

Global

- The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, coordinated by the UNAIDS Secretariat, continues to bring together civil society, academic institutions and UN agencies to raise the visibility and strengthen advocacy on issues related to women and AIDS.
- The World Bank-led AIDS Strategy and Action Plan (ASAP) service is facilitating integration of gender into strategic and action planning through: (i) peer reviews that include a gender specialist; (ii) targeted technical and financial support; and (iii) coordination with the Cosponsors and the Secretariat on gender issues (with UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO, ILO and WHO). To date, 53 countries have received guidance: 22 in sub-Saharan Africa, 10 in Latin America; 6 in the Caribbean; 4 in the Middle East and North Africa; 4 in Central and Eastern Europe; and 7 in Asia.
- The Interagency Task Team on Education, coordinated by UNESCO, has produced 2,000 copies of a multilingual CD-ROM (English, French, and Spanish), *Review of the Evidence: Girls' Education and HIV Prevention*, containing more than 100 recent resources on education, gender and HIV.
- The Interagency Task Team on Prevention of HIV in Pregnant Women, Mothers and their Children through its Working Group on Primary Prevention and Sexual and Reproductive Health of People living with HIV (led by UNFPA and comprising UNICEF, WHO, Columbia University, International Planned Parenthood Federation, Family Health International, the International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS, and the UNAIDS Secretariat) is developing indicators and guidance on primary prevention and on the sexual and reproductive health of people living with HIV in the context of comprehensive prevention of parent to child transmission.
- UNIFEM has developed *Transforming the National AIDS Response: Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights into the 'Three Ones'*, to provide approaches, strategies, and checklists for integrating gender equality and women's rights into HIV policies, programmes and institutional mechanisms in the context of the "Three Ones".

Regional

- UNAIDS Regional Support Teams are providing assistance to a range of regional, interagency and multi-stakeholder initiatives. For example, the West and Central Africa Support Team is assisting with the integration of gender and human rights aspects in HIV laws by building legal services and literacy with regional partners including UNDP,

⁵ A complete mapping will be provided as a conference room paper to the 23rd PCB meeting.

UNIFEM, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, the Open Society Initiative West Africa and AWARE-RH (Action for West Africa Region - Reproductive Health).

- UNHCR is working to generate appropriate responses to the problems of HIV risk and vulnerability among sex workers who are who are refugees or internally displaced persons in Eastern Europe.
- UNDP is working with UNIFEM and the UNAIDS Secretariat to research and address links between barriers to property and inheritance rights for women and HIV vulnerability in South Asia.

Country

- Financial and technical support has been provided by the UNAIDS Regional Support Team in Latin America and the World Bank to El Salvador and Guatemala to strengthen gender components in national strategic plans and Global Fund proposals.
- A tool on "Integrating gender into HIV/AIDS programmes in the health sector" has been developed by WHO, and piloted in Tanzania, North and South Sudan, Belize, Honduras and Nicaragua. In Tanzania, the piloting process resulted in capacity building of programme managers and health care providers of voluntary counselling and testing (VCT), HIV treatment and care, and prevention of parent to child transmission services in two regions of the country. It also resulted in integration of gender into the national HIV health sector strategy. In North Sudan, the tool was used to conduct a gender assessment of VCT centres. The process resulted in integration of gender issues into North Sudan's national VCT standard operating procedures.
- UNODC is accelerating support to governments and civil society in several countries including Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nepal, to develop and scale up effective HIV prevention, treatment and care services targeted at female injecting drug users and other women (including those involved in sex work and spouses of male drug users) in community and prison settings.
- Trainings to engage men as partners in reproductive health programmes, including HIV responses, are being sponsored by UNESCO and UNFPA in Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea and Samoa.
- A Joint UN Programme to Address Violence against Women has been established in Bangladesh with attention to the intersection of violence and HIV. This programme is coordinated by ILO with support from UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNIFEM, the UNAIDS Secretariat, WHO and the International Organization for Migration.
- Report Cards on HIV Prevention for Girls and Young Women have been developed in 25 countries and disseminated by UNFPA, International Planned Parenthood Federation and Young Positives through the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS. Each Report Card provides a country profile and information on HIV prevention, and offers recommendations for action. In-country follow-up is taking place with existing Report Cards, including advocacy training, and youth symposiums. Stakeholders meetings are being convened in order to build national and community capacity, and gain evidence about what works to prevent HIV in young women and girls.

- UNIFEM has been working with UN Theme Groups on HIV/AIDS to link national AIDS councils with gender equality advocates and women living with and affected by HIV, providing technical support and contributing to engendering plans and policies developed by national AIDS councils in Barbados, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Ecuador, Cambodia, Dominican Republic, Honduras, India, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Mali, Mexico, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Thailand, Togo and Zimbabwe. UNIFEM has also worked with an additional 21 national AIDS councils, and two regional bureaus – the Pan Caribbean Partnership against HIV and AIDS and the Central Asia Control Project – to provide training in gender analysis and women’s human rights-based approaches.

ANNEX B

Addressing HIV among men who have sex with men, transgender, bisexual and lesbian populations

In September 2008, UNDP, on behalf of the interagency working group, put out a call to working group members (UNDP, UNAIDS Secretariat, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNODC, WHO) to provide information on recent past, current and anticipated activities to address HIV among men who have sex with men and transgender persons. Responses showed a range of activities at the global, regional and country level, with significantly less thematic and regional coverage than is the case with activities on women, girls, gender inequality and HIV.

A quick analysis of the results showed that the majority of reported activities (65%) provide technical and financial support, followed by policy development and advocacy (23%). The fewest activities are in the area of research and knowledge production (11%). In terms of coverage, about ten percent (10%) of activities reported were global, with the remaining evenly split between the regional and country-level. The distribution of activities among regions varied considerably. For example, almost half of reported activities took place in Latin America and the Caribbean, followed by almost a quarter of activities in Asia and the Pacific.

Global

- The UNAIDS family, with coordination by UNFPA, is developing “in-reach” training modules for UN staff at all levels, focusing on HIV and most at risk populations, including sex workers, men who have sex with men, and injecting drugs users. The modules designed to familiarize UN staff with key issues relating to most at risk populations, will address stigma and discrimination, attitudes, awareness-raising, and key policy and programmatic approaches.
- Several key policy and accountability frameworks have integrated issues relating to men who have sex with men. These include the UNAIDS Practical Guidelines for Intensifying HIV Prevention (2005); the UNAIDS Policy Brief on Men Who Have Sex With Men and HIV (2007); and the development of five indicators relating to men who have sex with men (of 23 in total) within the 2008/2010 UNGASS reporting framework. More broadly, this includes developing global level normative and technical guidance for different sectors.
- Global Fund applicants in the Caribbean and South Asia have been given support to incorporate programming that focuses on sexual minorities for round 9 applications in 2008.

Regional

- Regional and inter-country networks have received technical support and resources to raise the visibility of men who have sex with men, transgender persons and HIV issues and to facilitate South-South learning.
- Ongoing analysis of epidemiological data is being undertaken in Latin America and the Caribbean, in order to determine the extent, and trends of HIV infection. This information will form the background for a regional consultation on men who have sex with men and HIV, scheduled to take place in Mexico in November 2008.

Country

- Community-level and national network-building initiatives have been supported in a broad cross section of countries and communities, such as for male sex workers in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka; community based outreach interventions have been implemented in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam; and support has been provided in China and Bolivia for activities addressing men who have sex with men, transgender persons and HIV.
- Projects addressing HIV prevention and care for injecting drug users and in prison settings are currently underway in Eastern Europe. In Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, the projects aim to improve HIV services for injecting drug users and prison inmates by addressing policy issues, capacity building and programmatic issues relating to national AIDS plans. In Romania, the project seeks to increase coverage of comprehensive HIV prevention and care services for injecting drug users and in select prison settings, by increasing access to these services, sharing strategic information to keep programmes on track, and responding to evolving HIV epidemics amongst injecting drug users and in prison settings.
- In selected countries, Joint UN Teams on AIDS with support of UNAIDS Country Coordinators are targeting interventions toward men who have sex with men, such as addressing the HIV counselling needs of men who have sex with men in the Russian Federation, and supporting a network of services on HIV and STI issues in a number of countries.
- Efforts to address legal and political challenges that hamper effective HIV intervention have been implemented in a number of countries. These include support for human rights protection and legal reform, promotion of non-discriminatory legislation, and support for anti-homophobia campaigns in several countries including Mexico, Colombia and Brazil.
- Clinical guidelines and training modules for outreach workers and peer educators that include issues relating to men who have sex with men have been produced and disseminated in Nepal.

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