



UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL SESSION ON HIV/AIDS

25 - 27 June 2001 New York

Fact Sheet

The Cosponsors of UNAIDS

The United Nations has been at the forefront of the struggle against HIV/AIDS for almost two decades. In 1986, it was one of its agencies that took the lead in helping countries set up national programmes to combat the epidemic. Since then, the UN's activities have multiplied around the globe.

THE WORK OF THE UNITED NATIONS RANGES FROM the daily efforts of UN staff worldwide to the talks on HIV/AIDS held by the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS. By redoubling the commitment of government leaders everywhere, the Special Session in 2001 is set to be a watershed in the global struggle against the epidemic. It is being held on 25-27 June, 20 years after the first clinical evidence of AIDS was reported.

Into the fray

- One of the landmark steps taken against the epidemic was the 1996 move to draw the main UN agencies involved in HIV/AIDS into a coordinated response. With the creation of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the collective knowledge, resources and scope of its seven cosponsoring bodies—UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNDCP, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank—could be effectively combined.
- These Cosponsors have taken huge strides towards mainstreaming HIV/AIDS into their programmes in countries around the world, where they also join forces with host governments and other partners to support local efforts to curb the epidemic.
- Together with UNAIDS, they are developing a UN system-wide strategic plan to fight HIV/AIDS. They are also boosting the UN's efforts by broadening this common front. Increasingly active against HIV/AIDS are other UN bodies such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).
- Building partnerships has become the hallmark of the UN's contribution in the struggle against HIV/AIDS. Recent examples include the International Partnership against AIDS in Africa (created to both broaden and sharpen actions against the epidemic) and the Accelerating Access initiative (aimed at supporting countries as they set up national action plans that incorporate comprehensive care programmes).

Individually, too, UN bodies are assisting countries and communities worldwide in their efforts to reverse the epidemic and manage its effects. At the fore are the seven Cosponsors of UNAIDS.

UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund)

ACTING WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE CONVENTION on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is the primary advocate for the protection of the rights of children to help meet their needs and expand their life choices. Together with its national committees and allies, UNICEF mobilizes the moral and material support of governments, organizations and individuals worldwide in a partnership committed to giving children a first call on societies' resources in both good times and bad.

A decentralized operational agency, UNICEF works with governments and NGOs in the fields of health, nutrition, basic education, safer water and sanitation to improve the lives of children, youth and women. It helps build national and local capacities to provide, maintain and expand necessary services, and to empower families and communities with the knowledge and means for self-reliance.

The rapid spread of HIV/AIDS is threatening the progress made in child health over the past two decades. The epidemic has a significant impact on adolescents, as adolescence is both a period of increased risk and a window of opportunity for the development of the skills, attitudes and behaviour necessary to prevent HIV infection in adulthood. The epidemic affects children and families, leaving many without protection, care or income.

UNICEF brings to UNAIDS its operational field capacity in over 160 countries. It has demonstrated effectiveness in communication and advocacy and a network of national committees. UNICEF's priority programme areas include youth health, school AIDS education, programme communication, children and families affected by AIDS, and mother-to-child HIV transmission. UNICEF's particular strength in meeting the needs of especially vulnerable families and children will assume greater importance in the coming years.

UNICEF has a website for its health programme on HIV/AIDS at

<http://www.unicef.org/programme/health/index.htm>

UNDP (United Nations Development Programme)

AN IMPORTANT OBJECTIVE OF THE HIV/AIDS-RELATED activities of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is to support countries to strengthen and expand their capacity to respond to the development implications of the epidemic. Activities are focused on identifying effective and sustainable policy and programme responses surrounding the epidemic's social and economic implications. The aim is to strengthen the capacity for an effective response within governments and civil society as well as within UNDP itself.

In partnership with many organizations, UNDP emphasizes support to initiatives that: catalyze community and national mobilization; create a supportive ethical, legal and human rights framework; are gender-sensitive; empower people to take charge of their own well-being, drawing on local resources and building on local knowledge and values; and foster an enabling political, economic and social environment.

Through its network of over 130 country offices serving over 150 nations, UNDP plays an important complementary role to that of other UN organizations. Within the operational activities of development cooperation through a system of UN, national and other executing agencies, it provides technical support in cross-sectoral, multidisciplinary areas of technical assistance relating to sustainable human development. It also has overall responsibility for assisting the Secretary-General in improving the coordination of operational activities for development, including the strengthening of the Resident Coordinator System.

UNDP's regional programmes provide an important mechanism for fostering intercountry collaboration and helping regional institutions and networks to strengthen their capacity to respond effectively to the epidemic.

UNDP's HIV and Development Programme can be viewed at

<http://www.undp.org/hiv/>

UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund)

THE MANDATE OF THE UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (UNFPA) is, *inter alia*, to build the knowledge and capacity of countries to respond to needs relating to population.

A major focus of UNFPA support at the country level is reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health. UNFPA considers prevention and management of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and prevention of HIV/AIDS to be integral components of reproductive health. In the context of reproductive health, the preventative interventions include appropriate and effective information, education and communication in support of safe sexual behaviour; interpersonal counselling (for both sexual and mother-to-child transmission); improved access to and provision of condoms; and good clinical practices to prevent transmission through exposure to HIV-infected blood.

UNFPA augments UNAIDS work by providing access to its network of country offices that support national reproductive health programmes. It contributes its accumulated expertise in reproductive health promotion and service delivery, with a special focus on the needs of women and adolescents, and on male responsibility. Also of value is its know-how in logistics management of reproductive health commodities (including condoms), and its experience in working with non-governmental organizations, arranging technical assistance and strengthening national capacity-building through UNFPA Country Support Teams.

Details of UNFPA's activities can be viewed at
<http://www.unfpa.org>

UNDCP (United Nations Drug Control Programme)

THE UNITED NATIONS DRUG CONTROL PROGRAMME (UNDCP) is entrusted with exclusive responsibility for coordinating and providing effective leadership for all United Nations drug control activities. UNDCP addresses all aspects of the drug problem, including such wide-ranging activities as demand reduction, comprising prevention, treatment and rehabilitation; supply reduction, including alternative development and law enforcement; and legislative and institutional advisory services to enhance governments' capacity to implement the international drug control conventions. UNDCP is assisting governments in the implementation of action plans, including the Declaration on Drug Demand Reduction, adopted at the special session of the General Assembly devoted to countering the world drug problem, held in June 1998.

The use of psychoactive drugs has facilitated the spread of HIV infection in several ways. The most direct is by HIV transmission through needle-sharing among injecting drug users. The disinhibiting properties of psychoactive substances also lead to sexual and other high-risk behaviour that individuals might otherwise avoid. Through sexual contacts, HIV infection is spread from the drug-using community to others. International drug control is therefore a vital tool for HIV prevention. In this context, UNDCP is active in supporting HIV/AIDS prevention in programmes to reduce the demand for illicit drugs. Youth and high-risk groups are particularly targeted. Coordination within the UN system has resulted in more effective programming responses to drug use and the AIDS epidemic in a number of countries.

UNDCP operates from its headquarters in Vienna, Austria, as well as from a field network currently comprising ten subregional offices and nine country offices. Liaison offices are maintained in New York and Brussels.

UNDCP's website can be viewed at
<http://www.undcp.org>

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)

THE MANDATE OF UNESCO IS TO FOSTER INTERNATIONAL cooperation in intellectual activities designed to promote human rights, help establish just and lasting peace, and further the general welfare of mankind. Thus, the ethical imperative is central to UNESCO's mandate and to its task of contributing in all fields of intellectual endeavour to human development and the building of a culture of peace based on respect for human rights, tolerance and democratic principles. In its fields of competence—education, science, culture and communication—UNESCO has both technical responsibilities, in terms of its programmes and projects, and 'political' responsibilities (in the sense of public and social morality) in the general approaches and broad principles governing its efforts.

UNESCO's cosponsorship of UNAIDS is based on the conviction that isolated actions against AIDS that are not developed in an integrated, cross-disciplinary manner may be doomed to fail.

Although not a funding agency, UNESCO can make a contribution to UNAIDS by virtue of the scope of its fields of competence, its interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary approaches combining technical skills and ethical requirements, and its 50 years' experience in intellectual cooperation. In the fight against AIDS, it can bring to bear the vast network of institutions with which it collaborates—in the short term to meet the most urgent prevention and care needs, and in the medium term to remedy or offset the foreseeable effects of the epidemic.

UNESCO's cultural website on HIV/AIDS is at
<http://www.unesco.org/culture/aids/>

WHO (World Health Organization)

WHO HAS BEEN AN ACTIVE COSPONSOR OF UNAIDS SINCE UNAIDS' inception. As the leading international public health authority, WHO provides guidance on effective interventions to combat the pandemic, and technical support to strengthen countries' health sector responses to HIV/AIDS. WHO develops and disseminates evidence-based norms and standards, tools, technologies and guidelines, articulates policy and advocacy positions, identifies the public health research and development agenda, and assists in capacity-building through technical and policy support.

WHO focuses its normative and technical support on the generation and dissemination of knowledge, prevention of infection, and provision of care and support to those infected with HIV. Knowledge generation comprises HIV/AIDS surveillance, and leadership and direction of research and development efforts in areas such as access to antiretroviral compounds; women-controlled barrier protection methods; microbicides; vaccine development; and social and epidemiological research.

Prevention efforts focus on promoting safer sex; providing sexual and reproductive health information and services for young people; managing sexually transmitted infections; preventing HIV transmission among mothers and infants; preventing infection through injecting drug use; promoting safe injection practices and reducing risks of transmission among health care workers; and ensuring the safe supply of blood and blood products. The provision of care and support involves providing voluntary counselling and testing; increasing access to antiretroviral treatments; management of opportunistic infections and associated conditions such as tuberculosis; palliative care; and psychological and social support.

A major obstacle to widespread implementation of effective interventions is poorly functioning and under-funded health systems. WHO is, therefore, intensifying support to countries' efforts to strengthen their health sectors and it is developing a global health sector strategy for adaptation to the needs, capacities and circumstances of diverse Member States.

WHO's information on HIV/AIDS can be viewed at
<http://www.who.int/asd/index.html>

The World Bank

THE MANDATE OF THE WORLD BANK IS TO ALLEVIATE poverty and improve the quality of life. HIV/AIDS entails an enormous loss of human and economic resources and poses a substantial threat to the economic and social growth of many nations in the developing world. HIV/AIDS requires expensive and long-term health care; it mainly affects adults in their most productive years; it raises complex legal and ethical issues; it reaches all segments of society; and it is spreading rapidly.

Between 1986 and early 1999, the World Bank committed over US\$ 750 million for more than 75 HIV/AIDS projects worldwide. Most of the resources were provided on highly concessionary terms through the International Development Association. To more effectively address the devastating consequences of HIV/AIDS on development, the Bank is undertaking a new response to the epidemic, working in partnership with UNAIDS, donor agencies and governments. The strategic plan for the Intensifying Action against AIDS builds upon the strong comparative advantages possessed by the partners to rapidly increase the level of action and available resources and to bring to scale the interventions needed for prevention and impact mitigation.

In its policy dialogue with borrowing countries, the Bank stresses that HIV/AIDS is a development priority and highlights the need for top-level political commitment, systematic health care reforms, human rights protection, and a range of multisectoral reforms to help reduce the factors contributing to the epidemic's spread. Whenever possible, Bank-assisted activities are advised technically by the other Cosponsors or the UNAIDS Secretariat and are planned and executed by individual governments, in collaboration with the concerned national and international partners.

The World Bank's primary section about AIDS can be found on their website at

<http://www.worldbank.org/>