

Summary of actions undertaken and planned by UNAIDS in relation to universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support for indigenous peoples

Indigenous peoples continue to be disproportionately affected by HIV in many parts of the world. This observation has been reconfirmed in a recent report published by Health Canada, in collaboration with UNAIDS and the Public Health Agency of Canada.¹ Several structural and social factors (e.g. discrimination, poverty, marginalization, and poor access to health services) increase vulnerability and contribute to higher HIV incidence among indigenous peoples, especially among indigenous women in low- and middle-income countries, men who have sex with men and indigenous people who use drugs in high-income countries. The 2006 *Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS* commits leaders to achieving universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support, and it is within this framework that UNAIDS carries out activities with and for indigenous peoples in Latin America and the Asia and Pacific regions.

1. Indigenous peoples constitute a population that is often stigmatized, subject to discrimination and difficult to reach with programmes and services. This reality partly explains why there are so little data on how HIV affects indigenous peoples, and why incidence among them is often higher than among non-indigenous people. In an effort to more systematically track HIV-related vulnerability and programming for indigenous peoples, this year's survey of UNAIDS Country Coordinators includes questions on how countries are providing HIV prevention, care, support and treatment services to reach indigenous peoples, and the role of the United Nations in supporting those efforts. The responses to these questions will enable the UNAIDS Secretariat to better understand the current situation, filling gaps in ongoing country reporting, and will guide the way forward in terms of future technical support and advocacy.

UNAIDS, since its inception, has supported countries to put in place a human rights-based approach to the epidemic, and support the meaningful involvement of people living with HIV (GIPA) and communities most affected by the epidemic. These guiding principles also apply to UNAIDS' own policies and processes. In 2010, UNAIDS, as co-host of the secretariat to the Human Rights & Tuberculosis taskforce, invited a representative of indigenous peoples to participate in the work of the taskforce and ensure that their needs and perspectives are appropriately addressed.

2. The principle of "Know your Epidemic, Know your Response" guides country action and investment in HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. By knowing which populations are getting infected, what factors drive their vulnerability, and who has access to prevention, treatment, care and support, programmes can be adapted accordingly. When applying this framework, countries should identify whether or not indigenous peoples are particularly vulnerable to infection, and whether their particular

¹ Health Canada. HIV/AIDS and Indigenous Peoples: Final Report of the 5th International Policy Dialogue, 2010.

situation is being adequately addressed by the national HIV response. Communities and national AIDS programmes – working together – can use this information to guide the actions that will advance universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support for indigenous peoples. UNAIDS supports countries to generate the strategic information they need, including through “Modes of Transmission” studies, National Aids Spending Assessments (to track which population groups are being served by investments in the HIV response), and community action research by people living with HIV (e.g. the People Living with HIV Stigma Index).

3. Analysis of the responses to the 2010 survey of UNAIDS Country Coordinators will inform future decisions about possible capacity building programmes on indigenous peoples’ issues for UNAIDS headquarters and country staff.

4. There is currently no designated focal point on indigenous issues at UNAIDS Secretariat.

5. At present, indigenous issues are addressed, as relevant, across initiatives to advance universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.