



Joint UN Team on AIDS
ETHIOPIA

JOINT UN TEAM ON AIDS

May 2008 NEWSLETTER

KEY PROGRAMS, DECISIONS AND ISSUES

JOINT UN TEAM ON AIDS/CORE GROUP IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE (ISTF)

Joint Review and Planning Workshop Conducted in Mekele-May 6-10 2008

Following the launching of the Multisectoral Plan for Universal Access to HIV/AIDS Prevention, Treatment, Care and Support 2007-2010, federal HAPCO has embarked on a joint review mechanism that brings together all the major stakeholders of the national AIDS response under one forum to discuss progress, identify challenges, and chart next steps in implementing the Multisectoral Plan. A third-quarter joint review of the Ethiopian fiscal year 2000 plan and review of a draft plan of the EFY 2001 (July 2008-June 2009) was held in Mekele from May 6-10 2008.

The meeting was attended by about 150 participants from federal and regional level HAPCOs, sector ministries and bureaus, civil society representatives, and development partners including PEPFAR and its partners, Global Fund, bilateral organizations and UN agencies. The first two days were dedicated to the nine months progress review of the 2000 EFY plan. The review was a continuation of the second joint review held in Adama in January 2008 and it also benefited from a joint supportive supervision conducted in April involving HAPCO, partners, the national network of PLHIV associations (NEP+) and others. Participants raised the major issues that were identified in the Adama review as areas for improvement, as well as new issues identified in the latest round of supportive supervision and in the reports by regional HAPCOs and federal HAPCO.

The next three days were dedicated to joint planning—the second step of a process started at an orientation meeting conducted from March 17-18 2008 in Ambo. Following the introduction of the main tools and processes for the joint planning process in Ambo, draft regional and sector plans were presented in Mekele for review. Participants thoroughly reviewed the draft plans against the templates and package of interventions developed by federal HAPCO. The findings of the nine-month joint review were also used as important inputs to the planning process. At the end of the meeting the participants agreed to finalize the draft plans by incorporating the recommendations of the workshop and including the input of all sectors. The final regional and sector ministry plans will be submitted by the end of May 2008 and consolidation by FHAPCO will be finalized at the end of June 2008. Approved joint plan will be disseminated for implementation by Federal HAPCO until Mid of July 2008.

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Ethiopian HIV Knowledge Sharing Network: Community of Practice (CoP) Launched on Wednesday May 29, 2008

The Ethiopian HIV Knowledge Sharing Network: Community of Practice, a joint initiative of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and Federal HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office (HAPCO) was launched on May 29 during a one-day workshop held at the conference center of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

The keynote address by the United Nations Resident Coordinator, Mr Fidele Sarassoro, and an opening speech by HAPCO Director General, Dr Betru Tekle, both stressed that the initiative will enhance the AIDS response through the networking of practitioners from HAPCO, sector responses, academic institutions and other researchers, NGOs, donors, civil society, the private sector and others.

The HIV Community of Practice connects professionals through electronic and face-to-face knowledge-sharing platforms. Its objectives are

- to enhance collaboration and coordination;
- to enable individual community members to learn faster, work smarter and avoid duplication;
- to open up a new channel for government to gauge the value and effectiveness of its policies and programmes; and
- to capture, synthesize, document and disseminate national success stories and indigenous knowledge

The network will be moderated and facilitated by full-time staff members. A resource group chaired by Federal HAPCO will provide guidance and support. Membership is open to any practitioner working on HIV prevention, treatment, care and support at any levels.

More than 100 HIV practitioners from a wide variety of stakeholder groups participated in the workshop and signed the HIV community of Practice Membership agreement.

During the launching, the community began a discussion on “the situation of HIV transmission and the response among young people in tertiary education institutions”. Discussion on this issue will continue in the community e-discussion platform over the next few weeks. Practitioners working on HIV and Development at all levels are invited to join the community and contribute.

For Further Information contact:

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NATIONAL AND GLOBAL ISSUES

UNDAF Planning underway

UNDAF planning starts on Tuesday 27th May 2008. As HIV is one of the Thematic areas of the UNDAF, the core group and HAPCO held a consultative meeting on 26th May to discuss and reach a consensus on the process of aligning the UNDAF Planning with HAPCO's Joint Participatory National HIV Planning based on the draft Regional plans that were developed at Mekelle.

"Regions and or partners are not expected to have a separate plan other than the ones already developed in Mekelle but partners should extract activities from the draft regional plans according to their comparative advantage," said Ato Hussien Faris, Head of the Plan and Program Department of HAPCO.

The consultative meeting was attended by Core Group members from, UNAIDS, UNDP, WFP, UNHCR, UNFPA and senior members of the Planning and Program Department of HAPCO. At last after a through discussion, the core group and HAPCO reached a general consensus on how to align the two processes. The tentative schedule for UNDAF annual review and planning has been shared by the planning team.

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Global AIDS Week of Action Celebrated

The Association of Ethiopians Living with HIV/AIDS, also known as the NEP+, was at the forefront of activities in Ethiopia commemorating Global AIDS Week of Action held from May 18-24. The week is celebrated throughout the world by civil society to demand urgency, accountability and more resources in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

Among the activities organized by the NEP+ was a candle lighting ceremony opened by the Honorable Dr. Kebede Worku, Deputy Minister of Health at Addis Ababa University. The event, attended by an estimated 2,500 people, commemorated the people who have lost their lives to AIDS and served to remind us that we all have a role to play in preventing the further spread of the epidemic. The event was supported by Action Aid Ethiopia, Mekdem Ethiopia, Ethiopian Business Coalition Against HIV/AIDS, Youth Network for sustainable Development, Volunteer Service Overseas and the National Network of Positive Women Ethiopia.

A half day consultative meeting with Media professions was held on May 21st at the Walta Information Center to discuss the role of the media in promoting the International Declarations that Ethiopia has signed up to. And a panel discussion on Universal Access and HIV legislation was held on 23rd May with members of the social and legal affairs standing committee of the Parliament to demand greater accountability, the allocation of more resources to HIV and the realization of the scale up ART and nutrition.

The week culminated in the development of a charter of demands for PLHIV in Ethiopia which has been submitted to the international committee of Global AIDS Week of Action. The charter highlights the demands made during the week including making Universal Access a reality by 2010, the allocation by government of 15% of the health budget to HIV as per the Abuja Declaration, and the demand for HIV legislation in Ethiopia.

The Association of Ethiopians Living with HIV/AIDS is the national network of regional and specialized PLHIV networks

in Ethiopia. Established to provide representation for all PLHIV in the national response, the NEP+ also has the responsibility of policy advocacy, information sharing, fund mobilization and capacity building for its member networks/associations. The NEP+ is one of three Principal Recipients (PRs) that will receive funding from the Global Fund Round 7. The NEP+ proposal is a 5-year request for funding focusing on home-based care services, food and nutritional support, IGA and treatment literacy & adherence education.

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VIEW POINT

Ethiopian Civil Society in the National HIV Response

According to International HIV/AIDS Alliance, the term civil society can refer to any non-governmental individuals, groups or sectors involved in the national scene, parallel to but independent from the state, where citizens associate according to their own interests and wishes, by towards a common vision or mission. It includes trade unions, professional associations, private coalitions, interest groups, but it is particularly used to refer to community based organizations (CBOs), nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and faith based organizations (FBOs), as well as people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA), their groups and networks.

In Ethiopia, even if civil society has long existed in the form of self-help system, the emergence of modern and legally constituted Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) is a relatively recent phenomenon. Their numbers has been on the increase and they have been quick to respond to emerging concerns like HIV/AIDS.

Especially concerning the national response to HIV, CSOs like edirs, anti-AIDS clubs, PLHIV associations and local NGOs, have been among the first to engage in areas like care and support that require sensitive, intense and direct contact with the people affected by the disease. They have also been active in awareness raising, behavior change communication, advocacy and mobilization of communities for action against the disease and in support of the people affected. According to an NGO capacity assessment conducted in 2006 by UNAIDS and Christian Relief and Development Association (CRDA), most of the NGOs covered had a deep understanding of the operational context, a sympathetic attitude in their work and the determination to function with in the constraints through the use of innovative options like an extensive use of volunteers. They also had a propensity towards programs rooted in local culture (like coffee ceremony) and incorporation of traditional institutions which contributed to a high level of acceptability and involvement by the partner communities. Experience has also shown that due to their membership structure, resource base and constituency they are more likely to be accountable to the groups of society vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.

At present, CSOs are participating in the review of the National Plan of Action and are contributing to the annual activity planning at national and regional levels. As indicated in the Ethiopian UNGASS report 2007, "the national response to the AIDS epidemic in Ethiopia is the sum of the collective efforts of many actors, notably the government, multilateral and bilateral partners, international and local NGOs, associations of PLHIV,

UPCOMING EVENTS

2008 High-Level Meeting on AIDS

FBOs, CBOs, the private sector, CSOs as well as individuals". As part of the preparation of the UNGASS report, eight civil society associations were asked to rate the level of civil society participation on the effort made towards prevention and control of HIV and AIDS. According to the report, the responses indicated that there was "...good participation of civil society on strengthening political commitment of top leaders and national policy formulation, the development of the National Strategic Plan and national reports, development of the national budget, and improvements on the extent to which civil society was able to access technical and financial support..." However, it was felt that the HIV/AIDS services provided by civil society were not reflected adequately in the National Strategic Plan. According to the CS responses, overall the participation of civil society has improved in 2007 compared to that of 2005. It was rated 5.9 on a scale of 1 – 10 while the rate for 2005 was 4.4.

The 2008 high-level meeting on AIDS will take place at the United Nations headquarters in New York on 10 - 11 June. It will review progress made in implementing the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS.

The high-level meeting will provide an important forum for stakeholders, including government representatives and accredited civil society participants. Discussions are expected to focus on the progress made, challenges remaining and sustainable ways to overcome them.

AIDS 2008: Universal Action Now

The increasing engagement and opportunities for a more meaningful involvement of the civil society has recently been confirmed by the successful application of two CSOs as Principal Recipients of the Global Fund Round 7 grant. It is the first time in Ethiopia that members of civil society have been selected to manage the GF grant.

The International AIDS Conference will include discussion of scientific, programmatic and policy developments in the global AIDS response. The conference to be held in Mexico City brings together the movement of people responding to the epidemic to share lessons and together stake out the road ahead. An estimated 25,000 participants and 3,000 journalists are expected to attend.

The AIDS 2008 theme, Universal Action Now, emphasizes the need for continued urgency in the worldwide response to AIDS, and for action on the part of all stakeholders.

However, the civil society participation and representation at all relevant levels in the national process still remains inadequate and its potential for a greater contribution not fully utilized. While there could be many factors contributing to this situation, the two main reasons could be the inadequate capacities of CSOs to make an effective contribution and limited awareness and conviction on the part of partners regarding the benefit the national response could gain from a more significant involvement of CS.

Therefore, all government agencies and partners, including the UN, have a role to play in ensuring and promoting the meaningful and visible engagement of the CS sector in the multi-sectoral national response to HIV/AIDS. Particularly the UN agencies can play a significant role in this process by advocating for an enabling environment and providing capacity strengthening support to the civil society sector. The emerging civil society networks like the Association of Ethiopians living with HIV/AIDS (NEP+), Ethiopian Inter Faith Forum for Development, Dialogue and Action (EIFDDA), Ethiopian Business Coalition Against AIDS (EBCA) and HIV/AIDS NGO Forum can serve as effective channels and partners in this endeavor.

In the next issue we will look closely at these networks, their areas of interventions and the possible roles the UN can play in the successful realization of their missions using its comparative advantage.

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3. Towards Universal Access: Scaling up Priority HIV/AIDS Interventions in the Health Sector. Progress Report June 2008.

http://data.unaids.org/pub/Report/2008/200806_TowardsUniversalAccessReport2_008_en.pdf

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