

UNDP HIV RESEARCH CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP

Background: The HIV epidemic

In less than a decade the HIV virus has crossed all geographic boundaries and divisions of class, race, religion, gender and sexual orientation. No country has been spared: no population is immune. It is estimated by WHO that one in 250 adults in the world is already HIV-infected. Infections occur mostly among adults in their productive years. The progression of HIV infection to AIDS develops most frequently among women in their twenties and among men in their thirties. In many parts of the developed and developing worlds, AIDS has become the leading cause of death for young adults aged 20-40 years. In an increasing number of countries, a growing percentage of new infections are in children born to infected parents. A conservative 25 percent of an estimated 40 million HIV infections will be among children by the year 2000. Globally, 90 percent of new infections are estimated to have been heterosexually transmitted.

Development practice: Creating a sustainable response to HIV

The epidemic demands a sustainable response within a development context. Development practice with respect to HIV is the practice of human development for two central reasons: firstly, the response to the HIV epidemic is focused on people's sexual, psychological, social and behavioural aspects. No roads, fertilizers, procurement systems or stock exchanges are available to distract attention from the fact that people are the focus of its practice. Secondly, all the classical components of development - transportation systems, labour markets, economic growth, governance, and poverty are within the causal framework which determines patterns and speed of spread of the virus and will also themselves be affected by the impact of its spread, its associated mortality and morbidity and the burden of dependency and social disruption it will create. No longer are failures to alleviate poverty or success in employment creation be just failures in themselves; they each affect what happens with the HIV epidemic.

The importance of Research perspective for ensuring chosen strategies can be implemented and sustained

Robert Chambers, in *Poverty and Livelihoods*, poses the question: whose reality counts? He answers that, for an understanding of poverty, it is that of the poor and that this imperative must redefine the role of the professional. Chambers argues that the basic challenge for the professional working to alleviate poverty must learn to see things from the perspective of the people who are poor and to allow the poor to analyze and express what they know, experience, need and want.

In this case of the HIV epidemic, perspective is particularly pertinent. The epidemic is new and unexperienced in the lives of those considered 'experts' either personal or professional. The

epidemic has no parallel in living history.

Those with the subtlest and most extensive knowledge of HIV are those living with it as part of their daily lives. Amongst these, there are very few leaders, public figures, elites or elders who have disclosed that they are infected. They are absent by choice. Those who speak out and commit themselves to working for change are mainly drawn from the ranks of the less asset or access endowed or, in donor countries, from the ranks of the socially marginalized. Those who are reflective about HIV are mainly, at this time in history, drawn from the gay men's movement and the movement of women. These are the 'agents of change' who must enlighten the skills and attitudes of the development professionals and their respective communities.

The commitment and contributions of individuals and communities affected by HIV have yet to be recognized or valued but they are extensive. Individuals and communities lie at the heart of a sustainable response to this epidemic but in most cases they need to be supplemented by further human and financial resources. The closeness of these individuals and communities to the problem and needs created by the epidemic helps to ensure that their responses are appropriate. As the magnitude and the development dimensions of the HIV epidemic continue to expand, community-based organizations are uniquely placed to understand and respond to the challenges that the epidemic engenders. Community level activities empower the participants to identify their own specific needs, and more importantly, to ensure that chosen strategies can be implemented and sustained.

Implications for conducting research within National institutions
National research institutions and concerned individuals and organizations which are close to or a part of the affected communities have the potential to carry out timely and relevant research, sensitive to the complexities of causality and of impact which are inherent to the epidemic. They are also better placed than external research teams to identify: 1) research themes, 2) methodologies of relevance, 3) organizations and bureaucracies responding to the epidemic and 4) how their findings are of ultimate benefit to affected communities and policy makers.

Because of the extent of the spread of the HIV epidemic and its social and economic impact, there is an urgent need to ensure that both community and government leaders share the ability to respond in an effective, complementary and mutually supportive manner. The role of external agencies, of UNDP in particular, is one of facilitating the development of enhanced national capacity to better understand:

- 1) the determinants and consequences of the epidemic, particularly at the household and community levels; and
- 2) the most effective and sustainable responses which reflect multi-dimensional aspects of the epidemic

UNDP RESEARCH CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVE

Background

This workshop in Canberra, co-hosted by the Australian National University (ANU) Humanities Research Centre and the United Nations Development Programme's HIV and Development Programme, marks the beginning of the second phase of UNDP's Partnership Capacity Building Programme. This initiative to enhance national capacity to analyze and respond to the HIV epidemic was created with the goals of assisting selected countries to:

- o create and strengthen their own capacity to undertake action oriented research and studies of the extent and nature of the psychological, social, and economic determinants and consequences of the HIV epidemic;
- o analyze the data and findings in a manner that would be directly relevant to programme and policy development;
- o assist programme managers, activists, and leaders to assess and redesign their policies and interventions in light of the research findings.

The link between the Humanities Research Centre at ANU and the causes and consequences of the HIV epidemic

The Humanities Research Centre has chosen Africa as the theme for the 1995 visiting scholar and researcher programme. Close to 300 applications from Africa were received for the 20 Visiting Fellowships offered at the ANU for the programme. Three major research themes which form the basis of a series of conferences, workshops, and seminars have emerged for the 'Africa Year':

- 1) Pre-colonial Achievement in Africa;
- 2) Out of Africa: Texts for Understanding the African Past, deconstructing colonial perceptions and recreating cognitive maps; and
- 3) What is happening in Africa Today: its history, literature, environment, health, economic and social development.

For several years the link between the Humanities and the HIV epidemic has been increasingly recognized as psychological, ethical, and cultural. These aspects have been found to be intricately interwoven in both the causes and the consequences of the HIV epidemic.

UNDP Research Capacity Building Partnership Programme

The UNDP HIV and Development Programme's Research Capacity Building Initiative involves Country Groups in Senegal, Central African Republic, Kenya, and Zambia as well as centres in Nicaragua and

Myanmar. The programme is based on the recognition that sources of learning must be local, that for ideas and programmes to take root within communities, they must spring from within, be based on the realities of lived experiences of individuals and communities, and must be defended and disseminated from that level. Participatory research initiatives support and create local processes of social learning which, in their turn, must be complemented by national capacities for thinking, reflection, analysis, and transformation of social learning into policies and programmes. In addition to building local capacities for social learning, the programme aims to create new approaches to the provision of supportive technical assistance. National teams and local communities take direct responsibility for the establishment of research priorities and methodologies and for the development of ethical principles to govern the research. They set the conditions under which technical assistance is provided and determine the areas where their own research competence is in need of supplementation or strengthening. Technical assistance is provided in a sustained way over a one to two year period, avoiding fragmentation of advice. The Partnership Programme facilitates the drawing down of assistance from the best possible external academic and development sources, whether international, regional, or national. The provision of technical assistance becomes more complicated and yet more relevant and sustainable, with outside expertise fitted into local processes of social learning. The processes of learning and skills building occur from within and facilitated from without.

Summary of lessons learned in Phase One Research Capacity Building
The objective of the the Research Capacity Building Initiative in Phase One was to establish a stakeholder. The Centre Internationale de L'Enfant (CIE) was considered a technical partner for UNDP HIV and Development Programme based on their extensive experience in qualitative data management and approaches in the field. However, early communications were insufficient for managing a mutually agreeable clarity for understanding partnership roles and responsibilities. Subsequent to this exercise, countries were sought for their expression of interest in becoming collaborators for this initiative.

Four countries, Central African Republic, Senegal, Zambia and Kenya agreed as participating countries to set research priorities for the Research Capacity Building Initiative. Missions, consultations, team building, in-country meetings and inter-country meetings were established to support the initiation of the research process.

To date research teams have been established in each country and research proposals have been received by all but one country. There is a question about whether countries are ready to conduct an analysis of data based on a guiding principle of this research initiative: the collection of data as a critical aspect of capacity building for programme and policy development. Country research teams will report on the status of their data collection

in the next phase of the research initiative. This reporting by country teams is the initial activity for Phase Two of the Research Capacity Building Initiative in Canberra.

It is anticipated that at the end of the project, participating governments, communities, institutions and agencies will have an enhanced understanding of the nature, the determinants and the consequences of the epidemic. National capacity to use research findings on the socio-economic determinants and consequences of the HIV epidemic in national and local programme and policy development will have been strengthened. The research initiative programme will also have contributed to the regional networks of HIV related socio-economic researchers.

Phase Two Workshop Outline

Week one: Two-Day Seminar on Research Capacity Building in Africa
The first two days of the workshop will be an opportunity to stimulate a constructive dialogue between the ANU African scholars and the members of the UNDP African research capacity building initiative:

- o The first day will focus on the objectives and activities of the programme. This will include talks by the research teams describing their proposals and the relevance of their research to programme and policy development. Discussion will centre around issues such as participatory research methodologies including rapid rural appraisal and research as an empowering process for communities to ensure that potential members of the technical consortium fully understand the initiative.

- o The second day will focus on transcending from discussions on specific topics and data collection to the limits of community participation in research, the complementarity of qualitative and quantitative methodologies and the potential and actual contributions of different academic domains to an understanding of the African continent

Week two: Building Capacity to Build Capacity

The objective will be to strengthen general research capacity skills of participants with respect to overall Phase II goals as well as building consultant capacity for the overall programme. This phase of the research capacity building programme will see the research teams clean their raw data, conduct initial analyses, and begin to interpret their results. This process should involve researched communities and decision makers from the start so that the translation of findings into policy and programming changes has its initial seeds within the research process itself. Skill development at the workshop in this area will focus on:

- o approaches to data analysis and interpretation,

- o community involvement in data interpretation and decisions concerning dissemination of findings to different stakeholders, and

- o methods for tailoring messages and packaging findings in user friendly format and comprehensible language for policy makers and decision takers at the policy and programme development level. Indicators of impact and other means of evaluating success will be reviewed.

In strengthening capacity, skill development areas will emphasize process consultation and the role of strategic questioning. In addition, the UNDP perspective on the HIV epidemic and its impact on development as well as the overall objectives of the Capacity Building Programme and the methods being utilized to achieve these objectives will be reviewed as indicated to ensure that potential members of the technical consortium fully understand the initiative.

Proposed Workshop topics to be undertaken

I. Research analysis and presentation

- o techniques of data analysis
- o tabular presentation
- o mapping and pictorial representation
- o textual analysis

II. Validation of research findings

- o discussions within the researched community
- o discussions with key activists and change agents
- o peer review
- o triage techniques

III. Dissemination of research findings

- o audience targeted for findings
- o timing of distribution of research
- o using the pedagogic approach
- o joint analysis by users and researchers
- o using advocates, griots and/or pop singers

IV. Strengthening the capacity for undertaking research

- o specific skills to be developed
- o teaching methodology for skill development
- o who will conduct teaching/learning
- o settings to conduct capacity building

