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UNAIDS/PCB(6)/98.4

7 April 1998

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

## **PROGRAMME COORDINATING BOARD**

**Sixth meeting**

**Geneva, 25-27 May 1998**

*Provisional agenda item 4.2*

### **Criteria for Prioritization of UNAIDS Resources to Country Activities**

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- The resources available to the UNAIDS Secretariat are very limited compared with what is needed in countries. It is therefore essential to allocate and use these resources in a strategic way.
- This paper outlines a process for prioritizing the allocation of UNAIDS Secretariat resources to countries. It rests on the application of a set of need-based as well as opportunity-driven criteria. The paper discusses the indicators that underpin the criteria, together with some of the key questions that may be asked in the process. Use of the criteria will allow for grouping countries into different categories that broadly define the level of allocation of the Programme's resources.
- The paper further draws attention to the different components that may make up a package of support from the Secretariat to a country, including strategic planning and development funds but also technical support and dedicated UNAIDS staff time. Additional information is provided on the management of the funds by the UN Theme Groups. These will serve primarily to leverage additional resources in support of activities that contribute to an expanded national response.

#### **ACTION REQUIRED AT THIS MEETING**

- The endorsement of the PCB is sought with regard to the proposal for prioritization of UNAIDS support to countries.



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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. At its fourth meeting in April 1997 the PCB reviewed proposed criteria for prioritization in the allocation of UNAIDS funds to countries. The Board expressed support for the proposal but asked it to be further refined before taking a decision about it. The PCB requested that more detailed proposals be presented at its next regular annual session. This paper discusses a process for prioritizing the allocation of UNAIDS Secretariat resources to countries, based on a set of need-based as well as opportunity-driven criteria.

### **A. Rationale**

2. The resources directly available to the UNAIDS Secretariat are very limited compared with what is needed in countries. It is therefore essential that those resources are utilized in such a way as to ensure maximum effect in achieving the Programme's objectives. This requires strategic decisions with regard to: 1) the type of activities to which UNAIDS allocates resources, and the level of such allocations, and 2) the countries to which resources are allocated. The resources that are directly controlled by UNAIDS are its staff and the funds available for programme activities. This discussion paper focuses on these resources. It does not deal with the (larger) resources available through cosponsors. It does, however, include the time spent by UNAIDS staff in mobilizing cosponsor resources for specific country purposes. The term "UNAIDS" in this document refers to the UNAIDS Secretariat.

3. The process of prioritization is essential for UNAIDS to operate more strategically in allocating and using its resources. The process should be closely linked to country-level Strategic Planning processes.

### **B. Objective**

4. The objective of a prioritization process would be:

- to select and rank countries for UNAIDS' resource allocation (where?) and to decide on levels of these resources (how much?);
- to decide what UNAIDS' involvement in these countries should be (what?);
- to identify other partners for cooperation in country-level HIV/AIDS activities (with whom?).

### **C. Methodology**

5. The prioritization process needs to take into account a number of elements. The process will comprise the following steps:

- development of criteria;
- application of criteria to categorize countries;
- definition of country needs;
- preliminary allocation of levels of resources to ranked countries;
- application of UNAIDS priorities;
- formulation of a "UNAIDS package" for individual countries.

#### D. Suggested criteria

6. The following principles have guided the development of the criteria:

- UNAIDS works through the UN system at country level;
- UNAIDS will leverage and strengthen cosponsor capacity;
- UNAIDS is responsive to country needs and requests.

7. Two types of criteria have been developed and must be applied in a balanced way: those that are primarily *need-based* and those that are *opportunity-driven*. Setting priorities should take both the perceived opportunity and the identified needs into account. This is a dynamic process: selectively meeting priority needs in a country (e.g. advocacy with government) may increase the potential to effect change through greater government commitment (increased opportunity).

Suggested need-based criteria are:

- epidemiology of HIV/AIDS;
- population size;
- need for additional resources.

Suggested opportunity-driven criteria are:

- potential to effect change (in terms of the epidemic);
- regional influence;
- well functioning UN organizations/A receptive UN system.

These criteria are described in more detail in Section II.

8. The use of these criteria implies at least two distinct but related steps. The use of criteria (both need-based and opportunity-driven) will allow for grouping countries into different categories according to their strategic importance in furthering UNAIDS' overall vision. This ranking or grouping will correspond broadly to levels of allocation of Programme resources. This needs to be followed by an assessment of the most appropriate support package for individual countries. In other words, there is no standard blueprint for UNAIDS' involvement in individual countries. The UNAIDS support package is composed of the different components of UNAIDS operations. These include: allocation of time of Geneva-based staff; Strategic Planning and Development Funds (total of US\$16 million for 1998-1999); activities supported by Policy Strategy and Research; allocation of intercountry staff time; country-level staff.

9. Application of the suggested criteria thus requires a summative approach, as well as a weighting of individual criteria. It is acknowledged that there will be exceptions and that in some cases a single criterion will be sufficient to propel a country to a high place on the priority list. The above criteria do not exclude this possibility, but rather seek to rationalize such decisions. In general, however, none of these criteria should be used in isolation from the others.

10. The needs assessment implied here will in many cases be part of the National Strategic Planning process. It is part of the tasks of the Theme Group, with the support of UNAIDS field staff. However, it

may not be possible to ensure that such an assessment is conducted in all countries, and it is proposed that this is done initially in a limited number of priority countries in each region.

## **E. Application of criteria**

11. A system is proposed for categorizing countries into four groups according to the opportunities (to make a difference, to identify best practice, to catalyze action, etc.) and the needs for support and assistance.

### **Category 1**

12. These countries represent those with both the greatest need and the greatest opportunity for assistance. In general, at least four of the criteria listed above will be in the “high” range. However, one criterion (e.g. size of the vulnerable population, level of the epidemic, or the potential to effect change) can be sufficient to place a country in this category. It is proposed that 50% of UNAIDS Secretariat’s resources should be allocated to countries in this category. Up to 30 countries would be included in this group.

### **Category 2**

13. Countries in this group represent those with good opportunity to effect change or to identify best practice, and with significant need. In general, all criteria will be in the “high” to “medium” range. Approximately 50 countries would be in this group, to which 30% of UNAIDS’ resources would be allocated.

### **Category 3**

14. These countries include those with limited opportunity and/or least need for assistance. In general, most of the criteria will be in the “medium” range, with less than four in the “low” range. This group would contain up to 70 countries, to which 20% of UNAIDS’ resources would be allocated.

### **Category 4**

15. This category would contain countries that would receive no resource allocation.

16. It should be noted that decisions about resource allocation should take into account the full package of UNAIDS’ resources. These comprise: Strategic Planning and Development Funds (SPDF); country activities and staff funded or supported by Country Support, Policy Strategy and Research and External Relations; technical support and Intercountry Team staff time; and Geneva-based staff time.

17. An order of priority could be allocated to the countries in each group, and assessments of need and allocation of resources would be done accordingly.

## **F. UNAIDS Programme priorities**

18. Programme priorities should define and limit the areas where UNAIDS' resources are allocated within the country assistance packages. Priorities have been defined at different levels, and can be found in the 1998-1999 budget and workplan.

## II. DESCRIPTION OF CRITERIA:

19. Criteria should, when applied to countries, be scored in a reasonably consistent manner. However, for many of the criteria proposed it will be difficult, if not impossible, to develop a discrete scoring system, as the indicators proposed are often hard to quantify. These criteria would be applied to individual countries using a Delphi technique, involving both Geneva-based and country-based staff.

### A. Need-based criteria

- **Epidemiology of HIV/AIDS.** *What are the dynamics of the epidemic? Is there either a compelling need or an opportunity to reduce transmission and/or to mitigate the impact of the epidemic?*

20. Questions to consider are:

Prevalence: Is the prevalence of HIV infection high, or has it remained low for a number of years with little or no tendency to rise? What is the trend and what is the distribution of the epidemic across the country?

Potential for increase in prevalence: Especially if the prevalence is still low, what is the prevalence of risk behaviours? What is the incidence or prevalence of traditional sexually transmitted diseases? Are there obvious socioeconomic or other factors which increase vulnerability to HIV (e.g. civil unrest, refugee populations).

High HIV prevalence or low (or rising) HIV prevalence with high prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases and/or high vulnerability to HIV.

- **Population size.** What is the size of the vulnerable population?

21. Questions to consider are:

What is the size of the population in absolute terms (does the country have a large, medium or small population)? What is the size of the population that is likely to be vulnerable, i.e. at risk for HIV infection? What numbers of people migrate seasonally or semi-permanently? What proportion of the total population is vulnerable?

A large number of "at risk" persons or a large "at risk" proportion of the population indicates a high score for this criterion.

- **Need for additional resources.** Is the level of resources available from government (public sector) sources, national non-public sector sources, and external sources sufficient to fund an appropriate national HIV/AIDS response (and if not, what is the estimated shortfall)? Where are currently

available resources being utilized? Are any resources available for strategic opportunities, and in what proportions? Are there major shortfalls?



22. Questions to consider are:

Level of government financial commitment: *Is there a government budget allocation to HIV/AIDS and STD prevention and control? How much is this as a proportion of the total budget for HIV/AIDS activities? How does this relate to external funding?*

Level of external donor commitment: *Are there external donors, either bilateral, UN or NGO supporting the national response? What is the level of this support? How does this relate to public and non-public sector contributions? Are these funds used in agreement with a national strategic plan?*

Low levels of internally or externally generated resources indicate a higher score as a need-based criterion.

## B. Opportunity-driven criteria

- **Potential to effect change.** *What is the likelihood that allocation of UNAIDS' resources will result in a strengthened national response, leading to reduced HIV transmission and/or mitigation of the impact of the epidemic?*

23. Questions to consider are:

Government commitment: *Is there political commitment to deal with the HIV/AIDS epidemic? At what level does such commitment exist? Is the commitment openly expressed? Is the commitment expressed through adequate staffing of a national programme, or otherwise?*

Commitment of other partners: *Are there other committed national partners? Are there active and effective national NGOs involved in HIV/AIDS? Are several ministries committed or willing to deal with the epidemic? Are there bilateral agencies working with the country on HIV/AIDS? Are international NGOs involved?*

High levels of government commitment, the involvement of multiple sectors and good potential absorptive capacity all suggest a high score for this criterion.

A lack of commitment does not exclude a country from our priority list. However, it would mean that UNAIDS' resources should be directed towards advocacy, awareness, and capacity-building to improve the potential for change.

- **Regional influence:** *What is the likelihood that the country will provide a model that may be followed by other countries?*

24. Questions to consider are:

*Does the country play an important political role in the region or subregion? Does the country play an important role or is it a role model in one of the regional or subregional collaborative or cooperative arrangements, such as SADC, SAARC, ASEAN, etc?*

The greater the regional importance of a country, the higher the score for this criterion.

- **Well functioning UN organizations or receptive UN system:** *What is the likelihood of the UN system having a major impact on the national response. What is the likelihood of UNAIDS influencing the UN system at country level to have that impact?*

25. Questions to consider are:

Committed and effective UN partners: Is the UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS active? Is there a joint plan for UN support to the national response to HIV? Is there good sharing of information on and coordination of UN system activities? Is HIV/AIDS seen as a priority by the cosponsoring organizations?

High level of UN system involvement: Is this a priority country for one or more of the cosponsors?

World Bank loan in place or being negotiated: Is a World Bank loan being implemented and, if so, does it provide an opportunity for the UN system and for UNAIDS to strengthen the national response? Is a World Bank loan being considered or being negotiated, and does this offer an opportunity to use a strategic planning process, that involves national, UN system and possibly bilateral partners?

The greater the collaboration between the UN system and the country, the higher the score for this criterion.

### **III. GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT FUNDS**

#### **A. Introduction**

26. In the first biennium of UNAIDS (1996-1997) funding for country-level activities was provided directly through National AIDS Programmes (core funding) and through a smaller amount of catalytic funding (programme development funding).

27. In 1998-1999, financial support from UNAIDS to country-level activities will be exclusively through Strategic Planning and Development Funds (SPDF). These funds will be provided to the countries through the UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS for support to national activities that serve to expand the response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The funds should be seen as catalytic funding and should be complementary to funds from government, cosponsors and bilateral donors.

28. The government and other national partners will be the major beneficiaries of these funds. It is therefore important that the Theme Group, the National AIDS Programme and/or any other national coordinating body or partner work closely together in planning the use of these funds.

29. The dialogue between the Theme Group and the government on how the UN system can strengthen its support to the national response to HIV/AIDS should include discussion of the planning and implementation of the projects covered by SPDF. Funding for core functions previously covered by direct UNAIDS funding should be considered in this dialogue and may be supported by the SPDF if the Theme Group considers this appropriate.

30. This document defines the criteria for the use of the SPD funds and proposes procedures for the steps to be taken in the preparation, review and approval of projects to be funded by SPDF.

**B. Criteria for the use of SPDF**

31. The criteria for using SPDF to support a project would be:

- the project supports the strategic planning process (situation analysis, response analysis, strategic plan formulation) at national and other (regional/provincial/district) levels;
- the project supports the implementation of priority activities that are defined through a strategic planning process, particularly if they involve new national partners and/or sectors;
- the project addresses priority areas in HIV prevention, such as prevention among young people and access to care and support for people living with HIV, and/or contributes to the development and documentation of best practice;
- the project supports and implements World AIDS Campaign (WAC) activities in strengthening HIV/AIDS prevention among children and young people;
- the project provides exceptional support to core functions of the National AIDS Programme if not funded by other national or international sources.

**C. Preparation of project proposals**

32. Theme Groups have been requested to provide UNAIDS with one project proposal submission only for 1998-1999. The submission may contain either one project or a set of related projects. Further project proposals could be considered for funding in exceptional cases (e.g. if the situation in the country changes or there are new developments that would require additional funding or assistance).

33. The Theme Group may wish to delegate responsibility for the project preparation to the technical working group or another such group on behalf of the Theme Group.

34. The planning of SPDF projects should be done jointly by the Theme Group or the technical working group and the national partners, which could be the National AIDS Programme, the National AIDS Committee and/or any other relevant national coordinating body.

35. The UNAIDS Country or Intercountry Programme Adviser (CPA/ICPA) or National Programme Adviser (NPA) will assist the Theme Group and the national partners by providing technical support in the project preparation, review and approval process. Further technical advice or support may be sought from UNAIDS Geneva or from UNAIDS intercountry teams.

**D. Identification of executing agency<sup>1</sup>**

36. UNAIDS has no administrative mechanism at country level and has therefore to rely on the existing mechanisms of the cosponsors. It is important to decide at an early stage which of the cosponsors will be the executing agency and will therefore be responsible for the overall management of the project.

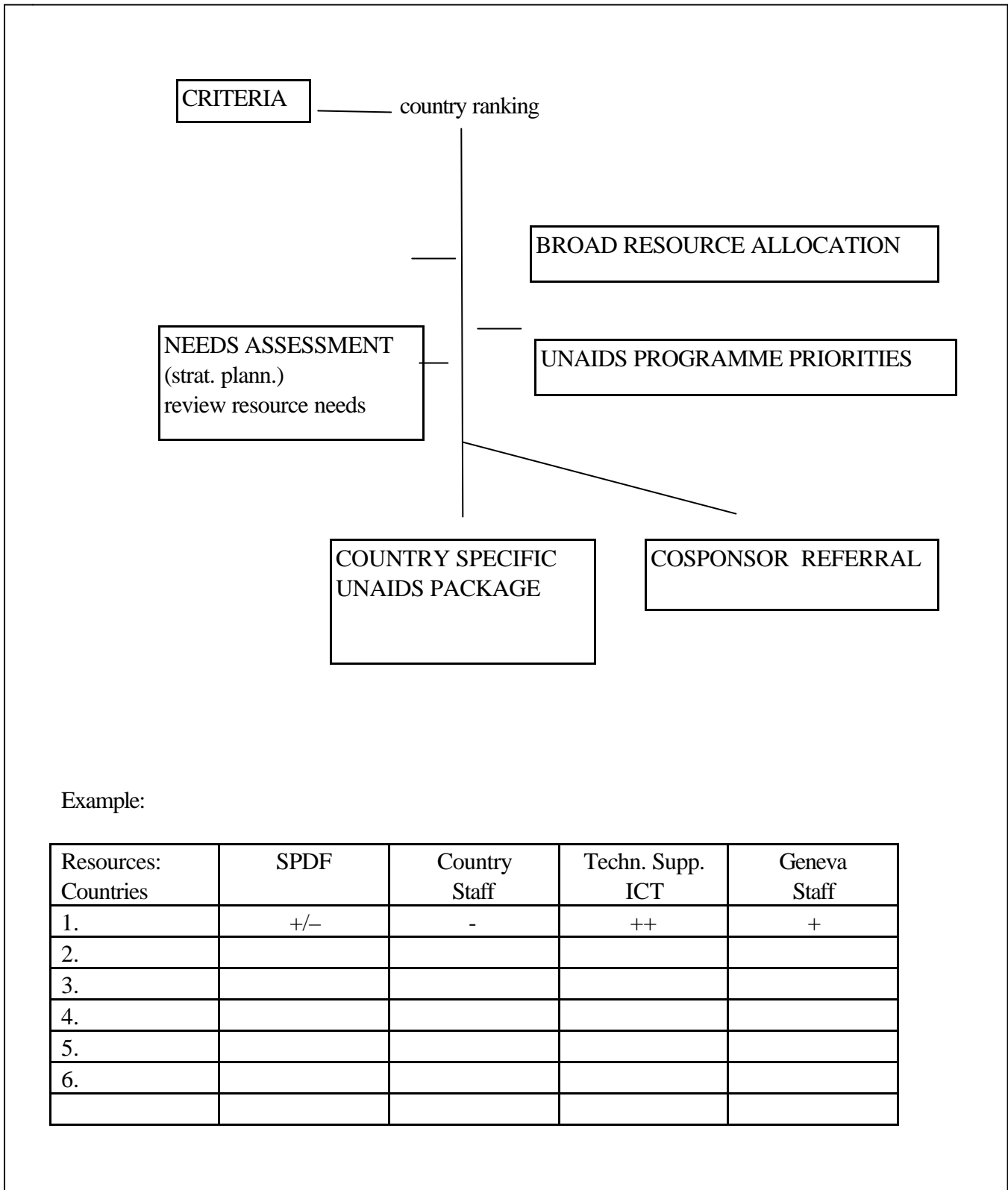
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<sup>1</sup> In this context executing agency means the cosponsor that will be overseeing the project and have the financial responsibility vis -à-vis UNAIDS.

Irrespective of which cosponsor is the executing agency, the Theme Group/Technical Working Group as a whole should be involved in monitoring the project.

37. Responsibility for the technical review of the project is delegated to the Theme Groups.

**Figure 1. Prioritization of UNAIDS resources**



Example:

Resources: Countries	SPDF	Country Staff	Techn. Supp. ICT	Geneva Staff
1.	+/-	-	++	+
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				