



Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNAIDS
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PROGRAMME COORDINATING BOARD

Fifteenth meeting
Geneva, 23–24 June 2004

Provisional agenda item 6:

Cosponsorship

Summary

The challenges of the HIV/AIDS epidemic call for a strengthened and expanded response. As the implications and repercussions of the epidemic are felt in a range of sectors, the UN system has become increasingly active and engaged in the fight. This has resulted in a growing interest among UN system organizations in joining the UNAIDS partnership as a Cosponsor. Three additional organizations have thus far met the established criteria and, after a thorough peer review, been accepted by the Committee of Cosponsors as new Cosponsors. This has increased the total number of Cosponsors from six, when UNAIDS was established in 1995, to the current nine.

The increasing interest of UN-system organizations to become UNAIDS Cosponsors has prompted the Committee of Cosponsoring Organizations (CCO) to consider in more detail the implications of a larger, more diverse UNAIDS partnership. The founding ECOSOC resolution (1994/24 of 26 July 1994) does not address this issue, nor has the issue been raised at past PCB meetings, although both ECOSOC and the PCB have been kept informed as new Cosponsors have been admitted. UNAIDS is thus seeking the advice of the PCB on expanding Cosponsorship, based upon decisions and recommendations made by the CCO in March 2004.

Action required at the meeting

The PCB is requested to review the proposals made in the attached note and to take action, as indicated.

Background

The Joint and Cosponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) was established almost 10 years ago through Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 1994/24 of 26 July 1994, with six UN-system cosponsoring organizations: UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, UNESCO and the World Bank. The Programme was designed to draw upon the experience and strengths of these six Cosponsors in developing strategies and policies for the Programme and to promote broad-based political and social mobilization to prevent, and respond to, HIV/AIDS within countries, ensuring that national responses involved a wide range of sectors and institutions. The last decade has witnessed a devastating spread of the epidemic through multiple channels, affecting development through its impact on health, education, the workplace (private and public) and food security.

In establishing the Programme, the Council had also emphasized in resolution 1994/24 "... the urgent need to mobilize fully all United Nations-system organizations [...] in a coordinated manner and according to the comparative advantage of each organization". The council did not then, or in subsequent resolutions, refer to the issue of adding UN-system organizations to the UNAIDS partnership. In light of the rapid increase in the number of HIV infections due to injecting drug use in some countries, the impact on human capacity and the labour force in highly-affected countries, and the threats to food security in much of sub-Saharan Africa, three new Cosponsors joined the UNAIDS partnership: the UN Drug Control Programme (formerly UNDCP, now UNODC—the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) in 1999, the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2001, and the World Food Programme (WFP) in 2003. In each case, the Executive Head of the interested organization made a written request outlining its readiness to join as a Cosponsor. This was reviewed by Executive Heads of the respective Cosponsors and a decision was taken at a subsequent meeting of the CCO.

Most recently, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has asked to join UNAIDS as a Cosponsor, through a letter written in December 2003 by the High Commissioner to the Director-General of UNESCO, in his role as Chair of the Committee of Cosponsoring Organizations (CCO). The CCO Chair has circulated this request, together with the justification and analysis of institutional readiness, to Executive Heads of the nine Cosponsors. At the CCO meeting held in March 2004, the Cosponsors considered this request, noting that: refugees represented a population group that was not covered by any of the existing Cosponsors; UNHCR is increasingly active with regard to HIV/AIDS initiatives; and the request has been endorsed by the UNHCR governing board. The CCO thus agreed, in principle, to accept UNHCR as the tenth Cosponsor, once responses in writing have been received from each of the existing Cosponsors.

As the HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to seriously affect agriculture and food production, impact heavily on human capacity, undermine industrial production, and disproportionately affect women, interest among UN-system organizations in joining the ranks of UNAIDS Cosponsors is likely to continue to increase. Thus, the CCO considered it important to review the existing criteria in order to determine how these could be strengthened to ensure that each new Cosponsor brings a unique comparative advantage to the partnership, and to consider the

implications of an expanded group of Cosponsors, including on the Unified Budget and Workplan (UBW), participation in the PCB and the increased transaction costs.

In light of the above, the following proposals are being presented by the CCO to the PCB for its further consideration and advice.

Acceptance of new Cosponsors

The process leading up to the addition of a new Cosponsor involves a number of distinct steps. First, the UN-system organization demonstrates a clear recognition of the impact of HIV/AIDS in its area of work. This is followed by some initial research and information-gathering, frequently supported by UNAIDS. The organization seeks to step up its action on HIV/AIDS, to the extent possible, through assigning staff and resources to this area and through more active participation in interagency activity such as through the Inter-Agency Advisory Group on AIDS or Interagency Task Teams on specific technical themes. Once some experience has been gained, the organization seeks approval from its governing board for its HIV/AIDS-related work. Strengthened action generally follows, including the signing of a Cooperation Framework with UNAIDS, which lays out elements of collaboration and mutual responsibilities. When the organization has arrived at a certain level of activity and internal commitment on HIV/AIDS, and considers that it meets the criteria (e.g., a mandate approved by its governing board, a dedicated budget and a dedicated unit on AIDS), it submits an official request to join UNAIDS as a Cosponsor. This request, together with the supporting documentation, is transmitted by the Executive Head of the organization serving as Chair of the CCO to the Executive Heads of the other Cosponsors, seeking their review of the candidature and eventual approval. Taking into account the need to enhance the quality and the scope of the UN-system response to HIV/AIDS, the relevance of the work of the organization, and the comparative advantage that it would bring to the UNAIDS partnership, each candidature is discussed and formally approved at an upcoming meeting of the CCO. The PCB and ECOSOC are subsequently informed at their respective sessions.

This process has worked well, to date, and the UBW resources have kept pace with the increasing number of Cosponsors. As this number increases, however, there could be more serious implications for the UBW, increased transaction costs for all partners, and implications for the UNAIDS Secretariat. In addition, there could be governance implications, such as in managing a growing CCO (e.g., the related increase in consultative and collaborative initiatives and mechanisms), and participation in the PCB. These implications were considered at length at a meeting of the CCO in March 2004 and the following issues are now being presented to the PCB for its consideration, advice or approval, as appropriate.

Participation in the PCB

As the number of Cosponsors has increased, their participation in the PCB has also increased, from the original six to the current nine. Given that these numbers may continue to increase, the CCO agreed at its meeting in March 2004 to limit Cosponsors' representations on the PCB to six at any one time. This number was decided upon, taking into account ECOSOC resolution 1995/2 of 3 July 1995, which states that "...each of the six Cosponsors will participate in the work of the Programme Coordinating Board and have full rights, except the

right to vote”. The selection of the six Cosponsors to participate in the PCB and its subcommittees/working groups will be done by the Cosponsors. In deciding to maintain six Cosponsors on the PCB, the CCO emphasized the need to act in a more unified manner and to speak with one voice, particularly in the drafting committee and working groups.

UBW

Adding Cosponsors will have implications for the UBW. The CCO adopted a three-pronged approach to ensure manageable growth in the UBW, while, at the same time, ensuring buy-in for the collective approach among new Cosponsors. Firstly, new Cosponsors would be considered/approved only in the six months following the approval of a new UBW (i.e., the next period would be July–December 2005). Secondly, new Cosponsors would not be entitled to financing from the UBW, unless there was unspent money that could be allocated to the Cosponsor, up to a maximum of US\$1 million for the biennium. Finally, in the subsequent UBW, the new Cosponsor would be eligible to receive only a limited level of UBW resources, rather than a proportional share, as would be the case for the other Cosponsors.

Criteria for cosponsorship

The existing criteria for cosponsorship of UNAIDS are as follows:

- The organization must bring an identifiable comparative advantage to the UNAIDS partnership and have a mandate to carry out activities related to HIV/AIDS.
- The organization must be a UN-system body.
- The governing body should approve a specific budget for HIV/AIDS activities and put HIV/AIDS on its agenda for regular consideration under the institutional and policy framework of UNAIDS.
- The organization should designate its own core resources to backstop HIV/AIDS issues, including a dedicated unit headed by senior staff.
- There should be a commitment to participate in the UBW on HIV/AIDS processes at the global and regional levels, including assistance in mobilizing resources for the same.

At the CCO meeting in March 2004, the following additional criteria were approved:

- (i) The organization in question must **implement a clear, well-disseminated HIV/AIDS workplace policy** that includes: a review/revision of existing rules and regulations to ensure consistency with the policy, which should take the Secretary-General’s system-wide policy as the minimum standard (e.g., in terms of staff rules and health insurance coverage); funds allocated specifically for workplace activities; and advocacy and training conducted with a time-bound target. Current Cosponsors should also commit to meeting targets and ensuring the involvement of the Staff Association and Human Resources Unit.
- (ii) **No less than US\$4 million of the organization’s own resources** (at global and regional levels) must be devoted to HIV/AIDS-related activities.

- (iii) For sustained membership, **the organization should have its own resources for HIV/AIDS-related activities** (at global and regional levels), higher than what the organization receives from the core UBW.
- (iv) **HIV/AIDS-related activities must be under way at country level in at least 40%** of the countries where the organization has a permanent country presence.
- (v) **The organization must have a track record of active participation** in UN Theme Groups on HIV/AIDS at country level.

Compliance with the criteria

It is proposed that, in conjunction with every UBW, a substantive report/assessment be presented on whether each Cosponsor corresponds to the current criteria, so that the PCB is assured that all Cosponsors are meeting their obligations. In this way, the expanded set of criteria will help to review the performance/eligibility of the existing Cosponsors as much as to select new ones.

The UNAIDS Secretariat

It was understood that an increase in the number of Cosponsors would have managerial implications for the UNAIDS Secretariat in terms of it successfully performing its coordination/facilitation functions at the global level. These would need to be assessed and taken into account as new UBWs are developed.

At the country level, since many UN Theme Groups on HIV/AIDS already include UN agencies beyond the nine Cosponsors, the impact of increasing cosponsorship is expected to be minimal. It is recognized, however, that fuller participation of a larger number of agencies at country level (i.e., as Cosponsors rather than simply Theme Group participants) might increase the workload of the Theme Group Chair and the UNAIDS Country Coordinator. This will need to be monitored closely with each new Cosponsor.

The impact of an increasing number of Cosponsors at regional level is difficult to gauge, since each of the Cosponsors has a different regional structure—i.e., some operate out of their respective headquarters and some from regional field offices. There are also substantial differences in the decision-making authorities and scope of these respective offices.

Conclusions, decisions and recommendations

The PCB is requested to:

- approve the proposal that requests made by UN-system organizations for cosponsorship be reviewed by the Committee of Cosponsoring Organizations and submitted with a recommendation by the CCO to the PCB for its consideration and approval;

- endorse the proposal of the CCO that, in accordance with the ECOSOC resolution 1995/2, six Cosponsors will participate in the PCB, as members, in any one year (with the selection decided upon by the CCO on an annual basis);
- take note of the additional criteria for cosponsorship, the process of participation of new Cosponsors in the UBW and the proposals for reviewing compliance with the criteria, as decided by the CCO;
- take note of the implications for the UN Secretariat of expanding cosponsorship, which must be monitored on an ongoing basis; and
- endorse UNHCR as the tenth UNAIDS Cosponsor, as recommended by the CCO in March 2004.