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Universal Access Targets and Civil Society Organizations a briefing for civil society organizations

Many countries are currently committed to scaling up HIV interventions to achieve Universal Access by 2010. Part of this process involves setting 'ambitious' targets.

Target setting process should be a process which is contributed to and owned by various stakeholders within countries, especially civil society. The involvement with, and ownership of, this process by civil society is crucial in terms of agreeing on the programmes to be scaled up, including populations to be prioritized and the implementation, and monitoring and evaluating the success of progress.

While some countries have already set their targets as part of their planning cycle, others have not yet done so. Target setting is only one of the first steps of the planning and implementation process of achieving Universal Access. It is important that civil society groups engage with the entire scaling-up process even if targets have already been set.

This briefing has been produced by UNAIDS specifically for civil society organizations interested in finding out more about the planning, setting and monitoring of Universal Access targets to guide national AIDS work from now until 2010. It highlights suggestions for engaging with this process and in addition to civil society organizations it is also being circulated to UN and government staff with responsibility for encouraging greater civil society engagement in AIDS work.

This briefing complements two existing documents that were produced primarily for government and UN staff:

Setting National Targets for Moving Towards Universal Access

http://data.unaids.org/pub/Guidelines/2006/20061006_report_Universal_access_targets_guidelines_en.pdf

Scaling up towards Universal Access: Considerations for countries to set their own national targets for HIV prevention, treatment and care

http://data.unaids.org/pub/Report/2006/Considerations_for_target_setting_April2006.pdf

International Commitment

At the turn of the millennium the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals drawn from the United Nations Millennium Declaration, agreed a set of simple but powerful objectives that have helped galvanize unprecedented efforts, at all levels, to address the needs of the world's poorest and most vulnerable.

Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 6 specifically seeks to halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV and AIDS by 2015.

Since the setting of MDG 6 a number of initiatives have helped encourage scaled-up action needed to reach the goal. The 3 by 5 initiative, for example, helped mobilize an increase in access to HIV treatment. In recent years discussions within the AIDS community have centered on the need for an operational framework that would

encourage scaled-up AIDS action towards the realization of MDG 6 covering all aspects of a comprehensive AIDS response from HIV prevention through to treatment, care and support.

On 2 June 2006 Member States at the 87th plenary meeting of the United Nations General Assembly adopted a Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS. Paragraph 49 of this resolution states:

(We) Commit ourselves to setting, in 2006, through inclusive, transparent processes, ambitious national targets, including interim targets for 2008 in accordance with the core indicators recommended by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, that reflect the commitment of the present Declaration and the urgent need to scale up significantly towards the goal of Universal access to comprehensive prevention programmes, treatment, care and support by 2010, and to setting up and maintaining sound and rigorous monitoring and evaluation frameworks within their HIV/AIDS strategies.

Existing global targets were reaffirmed and one additional global target – on resources - was established:

Recognize that the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS has estimated that 20 to 23 billion United States dollars per annum is needed by 2010 to support rapidly scaled-up AIDS responses in low- and middle-income countries, and therefore commit ourselves to taking measures to ensure that new and additional resources are made available from donor countries and also from national budgets and other national sources;

UNAIDS maintains that clear national targets will promote partner alignment to national priorities and hold countries directly accountable for reaching the targets they set themselves. The targets will also facilitate efforts by countries and international partners to mobilize international support and resources.

During the High Level Meeting, countries committed themselves to set targets by the end of 2006. UNAIDS country offices are working closely with national authorities and partners, in particular civil society, to facilitate the joint setting of and consensus building on ambitious targets, in support of better harmonization and alignment.

National Target Setting -Target Setting Principles and Key Steps

UNAIDS encourages and supports multisectoral consultative processes in defining national targets, ideally before the end of 2006, in line with the promise made by countries at the High Level Meeting on AIDS. Most countries are set to meet this deadline but for some countries the targets will be set during the first months of 2007 to correspond with their national strategic planning cycle.

Broad involvement of all stakeholders is not only appropriate from the point of view of establishing wide ownership, accountability and transparency, it is also necessary for the target-setting process to truly address the specific dynamics of the national epidemic.

UNAIDS maintains that the Universal Access target-setting process will offer a critical framework for assessing national commitments, assist efforts by governments to tailor their responses to the particular nature and needs of the epidemics at country and sub national level, and encourage broadly inclusive approaches.

UNAIDS has issued a number of principles and steps for setting national targets, described in greater detail in *Setting National Targets for Moving Towards Universal Access* which include the need to:

- Ensure country ownership and participation
- Build on past efforts
- Review of existing data and data collection systems
- Review existing indicators
- Set targets as part of national strategic plans
- Identify and overcome obstacles to scale up
- Promote human rights, gender and the greater involvement of people living with HIV and AIDS (GIPA)
- Ensure quality of and equity in access to services
- Set priorities and overcoming obstacles
- Limit the number of targets
- Use the targets to mobilize resources

Steps promoted by UNAIDS for setting national targets include:

- Review the status and transmission dynamics of the HIV epidemic
- Define and prioritize the interventions to be included in the national response
- Estimate the size of populations in need
- Review the current coverage rates and historic rate of scaling up, and project the potential achievements by 2010
- Determine the resources available, the current coverage capacity and what would be required to overcome identified obstacles
- Estimate the impact on rate of scale up that would result from investments in overcoming specific obstacles
- Refer to the set of 11 existing indicators—seven core indicators and four recommended indicators
- Report on progress towards targets within existing country-level monitoring mechanisms and information sources

At country level the key principles promoting the inclusion of civil society in strategic planning, delivery and monitoring of AIDS responses are the *Three Ones Principles*.¹

The Three Ones seek to achieve the most effective and efficient use of resources, and to ensure rapid action and results-based management.

¹ **One** agreed AIDS Action Framework that provides the basis for coordinating the work of all partners; **One** National AIDS Coordinating Authority, with a broad-based multisectoral mandate; and **One** agreed country-level Monitoring and Evaluation System

The need for civil society engagement

No single agency can define and then achieve Universal Access by 2010.

People living with HIV and other civil society organizations are indispensable partners at all levels and help drive the important role of monitoring progress and holding stakeholders accountable to set targets.

The alliances and partnerships necessary for Universal Access to succeed are extremely broad and include: religious leaders, policy makers, service providers, advocates and the activist community, national and local governments, civil society, bilateral donors, multilateral organizations, foundations, the private sector (as employers and as treatment implementers), trade unions, traditional authorities, faith-based organizations, nongovernmental organizations (international and national), humanitarian organizations and community-based organizations, the media, human rights and legal support groups, youth, women's organizations, networks of people living with HIV and organizations working with hard to reach or most affected populations (for example: sex workers, drug users, men having sex with men, migrants, indigenous people, refugees, prisoners).

Civil society activism and engagement around Universal Access is essential, to ensure that the concerns of vulnerable populations are addressed and communities are empowered to contribute to scaling up. A recent letter signed by a number of civil society organizations reflects the civil society demand for clearer actions on support for civil society engagement:

"We know achieving Universal Access will never happen without us. Policy makers at international, regional and international level will never deliver unless civil society holds them accountable and plays its full role in the work Universal Access entails."

In the **Operational Guidelines** UNAIDS makes the case to governments for full civil society participation in target setting to help achieve effective outcomes and legitimate targets.

"...civil society is well placed to comment on the feasibility, relevance and cost of proposed targets and activities. People living with HIV, representatives of most-at-risk populations or those who assist them can provide comprehensive information on the specific behaviour patterns that may be driving the epidemic in a country and how best to reach their constituency with targeted and effective services."

Strategies proposed by UNAIDS to government agencies to ensure active and meaningful involvement of civil society in ambitious target setting include:

- The development of a straightforward process for civil society engagement on target-setting
- Encouragement to governments to have a designated focal person and to distribute information widely. UNAIDS headquarters will be writing to all governments engaged in national target setting to ask them to designate a focal point to liaise with civil society on Universal Access processes and to disseminate the contact information widely.

- The Provision of clear briefings to civil society on the target-setting process - including print and electronic communication
- Access for civil society organizations to draft plans, proposed targets and other documentation - including discussions of plans to measure progress
- Collaboration with regional civil society networks on how to jointly support the country-based networks with information and advocacy campaigns, and capacity building

Practical steps that civil society groups could take to support this process include:

- The formulation and agreement of a national target or indicator to measure the level of civil society participation in Universal Access or national AIDS processes
- National groups could also rally support for a target on civil society participation in the National AIDS Council or Committee possibly supplemented with a target that assesses governmental support to, and engagement with, civil society and people living with HIV and AIDS

The process so far - country consultation processes

Following several high level commitments, including the G8 summit in July 2005 and the UN Summit in December 2005, UNAIDS facilitated consultations at country, regional and global level to address obstacles to scaling up. The outcomes of these consultations resulted in an Assessment Report, which informed the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS, adopted at the 2006 UN High Level Meeting on AIDS.

About 120 countries held country consultations to address obstacles to scaling up. Throughout the process, the UNAIDS Secretariat has stressed the need to involve civil society.

During seven regional consultations to explore the outcomes of the country consultations, the Secretariat facilitated the inclusion of civil society members in the country delegations to ensure that the views of civil society were incorporated in the regional commitments. In the case of the African continent, for example, this resulted in a strong engagement of civil society in the drafting of the Brazzaville Commitment, and the subsequent Abuja Call for Action and Common African Position as input to the 2006 High level Meeting.

Though an increasing number of countries report to have set targets with the help of civil society feedback indicates that civil society involvement has often been largely limited to major organizations, without significant mobilization of community-based organizations. In some instances, civil society was not invited to join the target setting process at all. UNAIDS has made it clear that this is not acceptable.

In September 2006 the UNAIDS Secretariat organized a meeting with its partnership officers at which they agreed on specific actions for enhancing civil society involvement, including the preparation of user-friendly information on Universal access. As a result several countries have initiated separate civil society consultations.

The Secretariat has also consulted civil society networks at regional and global level on how to support greater involvement of country-based civil society organizations. These consultations confirm the challenges faced by civil society, including reluctance of governments to involve civil society, limited capacity of some civil society actors for effective representation, and limited coordination and communication between civil society organizations at different levels. Regional networks are encouraged to collaborate with their country-based members on wider engagement of civil society in scaling up. Country-based civil society organizations should contact the UNAIDS Country Office to get involved in the process.

Many civil society organizations are actively monitoring progress towards Universal Access to ensure the momentum to increase action is not lost. UNAIDS has committed to support their efforts by providing strategic information on the progress of scale-up to increase accountability.

A number of coalitions and networks including the World AIDS Campaign www.worldaidscampaign.org are actively tracking progress and encouraging civil society groups to network and share experiences and information on the Universal Access process.

The website www.ungasshiv.org offers a campaigning and information platform for civil society groups tracking Universal Access progress. The website describes itself as "a place for campaigners and other civil society groups to share their ideas and concerns as we fight for care, support, treatment and prevention for everybody by 2010. Leaders from around the world promised to deliver Universal Access – we aim to ensure they "Keep the Promise."

The setting of targets is one key component of scaling up towards Universal Access. Civil society must also be involved with the scaling up and ongoing monitoring of services to ensure their quality, sustainability and equity.

Status of national targets

Though countries are only expected to set targets for scaling up towards Universal access by the end of 2006, 84 countries had set targets by the end of October 2006, mostly as part of their national planning cycle. The majority of these countries have set targets for treatment and for at least one prevention intervention (76 and 77 countries respectively), whereas about half of the countries have set targets for all prevention, treatment, care and support. The targets are for the most part ambitious, for example many countries aim to double or triple their 2005 levels of treatment coverage by 2010.

For detailed information about country processes to set targets please see

<http://www.unaids.org/en/Coordination/Initiatives/default.asp>

A region by region analysis is already posted depicting progress being made in target setting and challenges encountered as well as the participation of civil society to date. Individual country examples are also being provided per region where available.

Since the process of targets revision, finalization and inclusion in national planning processes is ongoing, a more complete picture of the targets set will be available early in 2007. Ultimately and where available, links to any updated national strategic plans will also be provided.

The role of the United Nations in supporting target setting

Scaling up towards Universal Access is one of six corporate priorities identified for the UNAIDS Secretariat for 2007. In addition to the Secretariat, the UNAIDS Cosponsors and the wider UN System are actively supporting the process of target setting in countries.

International reporting on the setting of national targets and progress towards their achievement is a key role for UNAIDS. Information will be collected, analyzed and reports published at key points.

These reports will be presented at upcoming meetings of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board, the UN General Assembly and at regional and international fora, including the International AIDS Conference scheduled for Mexico in 2008.

In each country ultimate accountability for UN support to the setting of national targets rests with the UN Resident Coordinator. The UN Resident Coordinator has the task of guiding the Joint UN Team on AIDS or the UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS in each country to facilitate the target-setting process.

The UNAIDS Country Coordinator serves as a focal point for facilitation and advice provided by the United Nations at the country level.

Support is also provided to governments by the UNAIDS Regional Support Teams and the UNAIDS Secretariat and UN co-sponsors.

Countries committed themselves to set targets by the end of 2006. Many countries, with agreed targets are now in the process of building momentum to ensure the necessary political commitment and resources for achieving the set targets. Other countries have only just begun the target setting process and will continue the process over the coming months. In addition, the alignment and integration of target setting to existing national planning processes means that a number of countries will continue with this process well into 2007.

During this time, UNAIDS has committed to provide ongoing support to countries to:

- Complete their target setting process, including consensus building for joint action
- Develop and cost robust national action plans, to strengthen harmonization and alignment of partners' efforts in support of a scaled up national response
- Continue support to the development of one national monitoring and evaluation system, in order to allow monitoring of progress towards Universal access
- Strengthen civil society engagement, particularly people living with HIV in the entire scaling up process, from planning to implementation

UNAIDS Partnership Officers and Focal Points

In addition to the UN Resident Coordinators and UNAIDS Country Coordinators additional capacity is provided in many countries through a network of partnership officers and focal points. Full contact details for these officers is available from the Civil Society Partnerships Unit at UNAIDS on csp@unaids.org

More than 60 UNAIDS partnership officers and focal points meeting in September 2006 agreed on practical steps they would undertake to support increased civil society engagement in the setting of National Universal Access targets

They agreed to:

- Share information on target setting widely and in local languages
- Support efforts to encourage all key civil society networks to meet on the national targets
- Leverage commitments from civil society groups, government and other stakeholders to work together on target setting.
- Make the case for civil society participation in target setting
- Communicate their own contact details more broadly with civil society partners in country
- Share the outcome of any consultations to encourage transparency with other actors
- Support the organization of any meetings between state and non-state partners on target setting
- Agree an engagement plan with the government to ensure that the target setting process is inclusive

As part of their ongoing work with civil society organizations, Partnership Officers and focal points are required to report on a regular basis on their progress with supporting civil society. Reporting mechanisms include twice-yearly reporting to the UNAIDS Country Coordinator who will include these reports within the twice-yearly UNAIDS Country Coordinator reports. Progress will also be presented at the meetings of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board

A series of Three Ones Guidelines, developed by and for civil society organizations, to promote how to secure strong civil society engagement in national processes, are currently being finalized and should be ready for broad distribution in early 2007.

Although the guidelines will not be available to support the target setting process in 2006 they will be a useful tool to support engagement in the implementation, the monitoring and tracking of progress towards Universal Access.

World AIDS Day 2006

This year World AIDS Day presents a strategic opportunity for civil society organizations to engage and comment publicly on progress to date in national target setting towards Universal Access.

World AIDS Day activities around the globe will call on governments, politicians, country-level partners and the international community to keep our promises on

AIDS. “**Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise**” remains the overarching theme of the World AIDS Campaign for 2005-2010.

UN Resident Coordinators, UN Theme Group Chairs and UNAIDS Country Coordinators were contacted in October to request that World AIDS Day this year is used at national level to support civil society engagement in national target setting.

The UN at country level was encouraged to initiate a number of activities including:

- Encouraging governments to use World AIDS Day as a platform to communicate national targets as well as opportunities for civil society review and input into target setting and strategic planning process
- Collaborating with the government counterparts on organizing a World AIDS Day Partnership Forum, panel debate or civil society consultation to solicit input into, revise or promote national Universal Access targets, and/or discuss what the country needs to do to accelerate AIDS services by 2010
- Utilizing media and disseminating information in local languages that promotes national targets and local opportunities for civil society to engage in strategic planning processes like AIDS forums, National AIDS Councils and consultation meetings
- Supporting awareness-raising campaigns on the UNGASS Declaration of Commitment and Universal Access process at the country level
- Leveraging public statements of government support to civil society and people living with HIV and AIDS in a bid to tackle stigma and discrimination

Monitoring and Evaluation Support

Measuring whether processes have involved the right groups can be difficult. Nevertheless, UNAIDS is committed to assisting in the monitoring of how effectively participatory processes engage the full spectrum of civil society groups needed to ensure Universal Access is a success.

UNAIDS monitoring and evaluation staff are posted in over 40 UNAIDS offices and support the engagement of civil society groups in a number of M&E activities useful to Universal Access. This includes information collection, in-country reviews of targets and progress, participation in relevant regional meetings, finalization of national targets; and the review of technical guidelines.

In addition to the Three One’s Guidelines, UNAIDS is also in the process of developing a scorecard-style accountability tool. The purpose of the tool is to assist National AIDS Coordinating structures, in collaboration with international partner agencies, and to assess:

- The level of participation and degree of engagement of country-based partners in the national response
- The degree of harmonization and alignment among international partners

The tool under development is called the Country Harmonization and Alignment Tool (CHAT). The Country Harmonization and Alignment Tool will primarily be used by national AIDS authorities to gauge the level of internal and external partner

adherence to the “Three Ones” principles and international partners’ adherence to commitments made at various international forums.

The tool can be used as a “barometer” of the current status of harmonization, and alignment at country level, and help identify where real or perceived blockages lie. It will also serve as an advocacy tool for strengthening accountability, focusing dialogue and driving progress.

The tool is currently being piloted in Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, Zambia, Brazil, Guyana and Indonesia. So far interim reports are encouraging with levels of civil society involvement reported as relatively strong. All pilot countries are making substantial efforts to ensure that key civil society groups are included in the analysis of the data and commentary on draft findings of the pilot.

The tool has been viewed in several countries as a way to improve transparency of the national AIDS coordinating authority.

Countries are also reporting valuable learning about organizations and groups who had not been included in the national response so far. Civil society groups engaged in the pilot are also being sensitized about the need for wider engagement in national processes.

Civil Society Engagement Strategy 2007-2010

Finally UNAIDS is planning to support the further engagement of civil society in the role out of Universal Access through the development of a strategy outlining UN support for increased civil society engagement in AIDS planning, implementation and monitoring towards Universal Access from 2007 to 2010. The strategy will complement civil society work outlined in the UNAIDS Unified Budget and Work Plan.

Strategy development will be take place in early 2007 and will be coordinated by the UNAIDS Secretariat and developed in consultation with all stakeholders including civil society groups. It will set out broad principles for action and describe the role of the UNAIDS Secretariat at global, regional and country levels, level of support available and the role of all UNAIDS Cosponsor organizations in the process. The strategy will include support for increased information on Universal Access for civil society groups at the country level.

Further information: csp@unaids.org