

UNAIDS STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

UNAIDS STRATEGY REVIEW: Focus Group Synthesis

Country: Latin America region.

Organizer: UNAIDS RST LAC

Date: August 6th, 2020.

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UNAIDS STRATEGY REVIEW: Focus Group Synthesis template

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SECTION 1: Information about the focus group.

Organization leading the discussion: UNAIDS RST LAC.

Discussion date: August 6th 2020.

Discussion topic: UNAIDS Strategy to 2021

Participants:

UNAIDS staff members of Latin America region country offices: Argentina, Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, multi-country offices, as well as members of the UNAIDS LAC regional office.

Country, regional, or global focus: Regional focus (Latin America region)

Introducing the theme

An introduction was made by the UNAIDS Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean. The central message was related to encouraging the free participation of staff, to discuss the transformational changes for UNAIDS in 2021 and beyond... He highlighted the fact that the Latin American region, is one of the most unequal in the global context, with great economic and social inequalities. Finally, he recalled that in the region the key populations are still the most affected by the epidemics of HIV AIDS, stigma, and discrimination, and now that of COVID-19.

Additionally, a presentation was made on the objectives of the culture of transformation within UNAIDS. One of the central objectives is to build an internal culture of equality and transform those cultural norms that allow the achievement of gender equality and social justice. The subsequent discussion was emphasized on the following points:

- UNAIDS strategy to 2021, and beyond.
- What should we continue?
- What should we stop?
- What should we start?
- Main recommendations for UNAIDS.

SECTION 2: People-centered response to HIV – key emerging messages

COMBINATION PREVENTION FOR KEY POPULATIONS	
How do we see the current situation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns, about the current situation of human rights in Brazil. • UNAIDS working with groups of people who have historically been left behind. The role of UNAIDS in advocating for key populations is relevant throughout the system. • It is necessary to define how the agenda can be expanded beyond HIV. • The reform is an opportunity to improve and renew the strategy, and to do more advocacy. • The current situation is fraught with uncertainty, especially regarding the reactions of States and their impacts on people's livelihoods.
What concerns us?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current situation of the civil society organizations, in the context of COVID-19. • That HIV AIDS is no longer considered a priority on social agendas. • Confinement measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
What gives us hope?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The opportunity to revitalize and expand our mandate and review the division of labor. - The possibility of generating more comprehensive responses. - Social protection is a topic on the table. - COVID-19 has exposed social and economic inequalities.
What constrains our ability to achieve our goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response to COVID-19 has taken over the agenda. • The social protection framework is limited, and it is very difficult to include everyone. • People are prepared to make their own decisions, regarding their interests. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen this capacity approach.

THE STRUCTURES THAT RESPOND TO HIV	
How do we see the current situation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interaction between HQ and country offices has been lost – more direct and efficient communication is required between country offices and headquarters. • There are too many structures to be accountable to, making interaction in small offices more complex. This impacts on staff burn-out and the lack of clarity about priorities.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The (external) image of UNAIDS is being prioritized (in terms of its structure) and less priority is perceived at the strategic / program level (reflection of the added value of UNAIDS at the country level). • The interest of co-sponsors at the country level in the HIV issue is being lost, although at the headquarters level there seems to be interest when the UBRAF funds (envelope) are distributed. The limitation of resources impacts the added value of an organization and its structures - we do not have resources to promote relevant projects or pilots. • Some structures are too hierarchical, and others are too informal. In addition, there is confusion regarding the added value of each group or task force in the organization, and a lack of clarity about the role of regional teams vs. country offices.
What concerns us?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Fund and PEPFAR can take a leadership role in the response due to the amount of resources they invest. • Lack of trust from donors in the organization's structures and in the impact of their actions. • Local government decisions have an impact on the performance of the organization at the country level. • Low visibility of the PCB compared to other UN governance entities. • Lack of consultation of HQ and RST in some projects or actions - activities are sometimes duplicated.
What gives us hope?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of how to lead the response to an epidemic, that does not have a vaccine. • Activism and community mobilization. • The framework of the SDGs and ONE UN. We are an example program in coordinated interagency work (Joint Team). • People trust UNAIDS as an organization. • Possible HLM in 2021.
What constrains our ability to achieve our goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence or limitation of financial and human resources. In addition, there is competition with co-sponsors and other international cooperation agencies. • Limited support from headquarters and HQ to country teams and lack of communication between teams at headquarters and RST requesting the same information in different formats or for different purposes (perception of lack of coordination between teams at headquarters and offices regional). • Limited empowerment given to country offices. • Limited institutional monitoring with clear organizational flows. • We do not have a mandate or management power over the FPs of the HIV Joint Team.

CONTEXTUAL ENVIRONMENT	
How do we see the current situation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is necessary to be closer to our partners (human touch). • There is a need to strengthen the offices in both human and budgetary resources.
What concerns us?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What will be the importance of UNAIDS LAC for UNAIDS GLOBAL? (how to highlight the region?) • Cultural change vs. individual change. • The offices feel forgotten by the headquarters in terms of budgets, schedules, etc. • Governments have left the HIV AIDS epidemic behind due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
What gives us hope?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New UNAIDS management (interesting Human Rights approach) - there is a noticeable change. • UNITED NATIONS reform - UNAIDS already has several structures framed here. • Culture of transformation - there is a real change (it is including all levels of staff). • Update the strategy and be at the forefront of changes in the world, with greater participation from the Country offices. • COVID-19 has highlighted the gaps in the response to HIV.
What constrains our ability to achieve our goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV is not prioritized in the global/regional development agenda (lack of political support). • HIV is not independently visible as a public health issue - it is generally framed within other health issues such as TB, Malaria, etc. • Barriers of stigma and discrimination. • Working with key populations and LGBTI+ (conservatism).

EMERGING PATTERNS:

- The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted gaps in the response to HIV.
- There is a perceived lack of coordination and communication between country offices, regional offices and UNAIDS headquarters.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the response to HIV AIDS has stalled.

- The new UNAIDS strategy is a source of hope. Especially because it will allow the institution to refocus its response.

SECTION 3: RECOMMENDATIONS

What are the key recommendations back to UNAIDS in terms of the strategy specifically?	
CONTINUE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNAIDS must remain a program and not an agency - it is necessary to maintain our closeness to civil society, especially the most vulnerable. • UNAIDS has been a champion in human rights, working on HIV with a focus on social determinants. • UNAIDS is a United Nations structure that is cost effective. In addition, it has multi-country offices and a democratic and horizontal leadership. • UNAIDS must continue to make all key populations visible, including those who have historically been left out. This can be achieved through advocacy mechanisms. • UNAIDS should continue to focus and highlight the response of communities and how they make a difference.
STOP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNAIDS must coordinate - we have country, regional and headquarters offices, but we are not aligned. • We must strengthen our strategic work and prevent our work teams from dispersing. This causes focus and time to be lost in being able to delve into priority topics. • We must focus on 1 to 3 results per country. Also, the number of requests for reports on jobs that are not aligned with the country's priorities, must be reduced. • UNAIDS must stop ranking. The hierarchy of power between levels of the organization is very harmful. Our efforts must be more horizontal. • The headquarters should stop making internal policies without the involvement of staff at the country and regional level. Voices of different technical levels must be heard and considered.
START	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the theme of the Joint Program, mainly at the Regional level. • Formalize the work of the Joint Program (envelopes). • Offices must have e-Imprest accounts and operational mechanisms for mobilizing funds. • Advocacy and Communications Strategy. • RST Roles - Country Offices.
Key recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNAIDS is not an agency, it is a joint program. We must eliminate formalities and barriers and be more horizontal. • UNAIDS has the unique ability to bring different visions to the table, even if they are at odds with each other, we must strengthen that role.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• UNAIDS must build trust with civil society.• UNAIDS must lead by example.
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Please share with us any references you think would be useful for the Strategy Development, such as examples of case studies that illustrate the challenges or recommendations you outlined in the discussion report.

Please also share a list of names and email addresses of participants who would wish to continue to be informed of the Strategy development process. Note names and contacts will not be shared publicly or with any third party.

You can send us additional documents via e-mail strategyteam@unaid.org