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Provisional agenda item 5

COMPREHENSIVE MONITORING AND EVALUATION PROGRESS AND PLAN 1998-1999

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan of UNAIDS is based on a set of reports produced by the PCB Working Group on Indicators and Evaluations.
- To monitor the global impact of the HIV epidemic, the collection and collation of data on HIV prevalence in different regions and countries have been strengthened in collaboration with WHO. Additional information has also been compiled on determinants and dynamics of the epidemic, including indicators of risk behaviour. Epidemiological Fact Sheets, covering the status and the trends of the epidemic in 213 countries, have been created in close collaboration with National AIDS programmes.
- The functioning of Theme Groups and the status of a coordinated UN response were assessed in 1996 and 1997 by user satisfaction surveys.
- A monitoring and evaluation reference group, consisting of Cosponsors, donors, universities and representatives of countries is being set up for advisory functions.
- The monitoring and evaluation framework follows a logic model. There is a causal link between the *outputs* of the UNAIDS Secretariat, the *outcomes* that are the national response to HIV/AIDS stimulated by the coordinated UN response, and the *impact* which is the reduction of disease transmission and the mitigation of adverse consequences of HIV/AIDS. The activities to measure *impact* and *outcome* consist of the improvement of existing tools such as the epidemiological information system, and the development of new tools, including indicators, indexes and checklists. The global indicators will reflect the effects of poverty and the gender dimensions of vulnerability and risk behaviour, as well as the social consequences of HIV/AIDS. At the *outcome* level, qualitative assessments will be carried out, measuring the Theme Group functioning and the coordination attained by the UN system (i.e. their potential to stimulate an expanded national response). The Best Practices Collection, one of the major *outputs* of the UNAIDS Secretariat will be evaluated in terms of processes.
- Evaluation guidelines will be prepared as part of the package on Strategic Planning Guidelines.

ACTION REQUIRED AT THIS MEETING:

- Request PCB approval of the comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan for 1998-1999.

I. BACKGROUND

1. The comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan of UNAIDS is based on the knowledge accumulated from a series of in-house consultations and a set of reports produced by PCB Working Groups on Indicators and Evaluations since 1996¹. These collective reflections and recommendations aimed to resolve the central issue of how to frame monitoring and evaluation in an organization as complex as UNAIDS. In view of this underlying concern, it was crucial to first define the boundaries of accountability in a setting where stakeholders at several levels were involved. The development of a checklist to assess the Theme Groups and coordinated UN action at country level, and the redefinition of the roles and functions of the UNAIDS Secretariat, produced useful criteria for drawing these boundaries of accountability. Models were created to differentiate between the monitoring and evaluation needs of different actors, according to the type and degree of influence they have on the ultimate impact, i.e. the reduction of the transmission of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). The major recommendation that emerged from the conceptual monitoring and evaluation framework developed previously was that the roles and responsibilities of each actor should be defined clearly in order to determine the indicators for accountability.

2. The *Issues Paper* emphasizes that the roles played by UNAIDS, Cosponsors, donors, governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have different levels of influence. The model shows that, on one hand, UNAIDS and Cosponsors have most influence in establishing mechanisms for joint and cosponsored action within countries and in monitoring and forecasting trends in HIV/AIDS. On the other hand, governments and NGOs exert the greatest influence for strengthening national capacity for an expanded response and thereby reducing the transmission rates of HIV/AIDS and STDs. The donors have little influence over coordination but more over transmission because of the power they exercise with regard to the level and diversity of resources. What is clearly demonstrated by this model is that, although they have varying degrees of influence, *all* actors play *all* the roles, a fact that makes it difficult to draw the boundaries of accountability.

¹ UNAIDS/PCB (3)/96.5, "Report of the PCB Working Group on Indicators and Evaluation", 8 May 1996

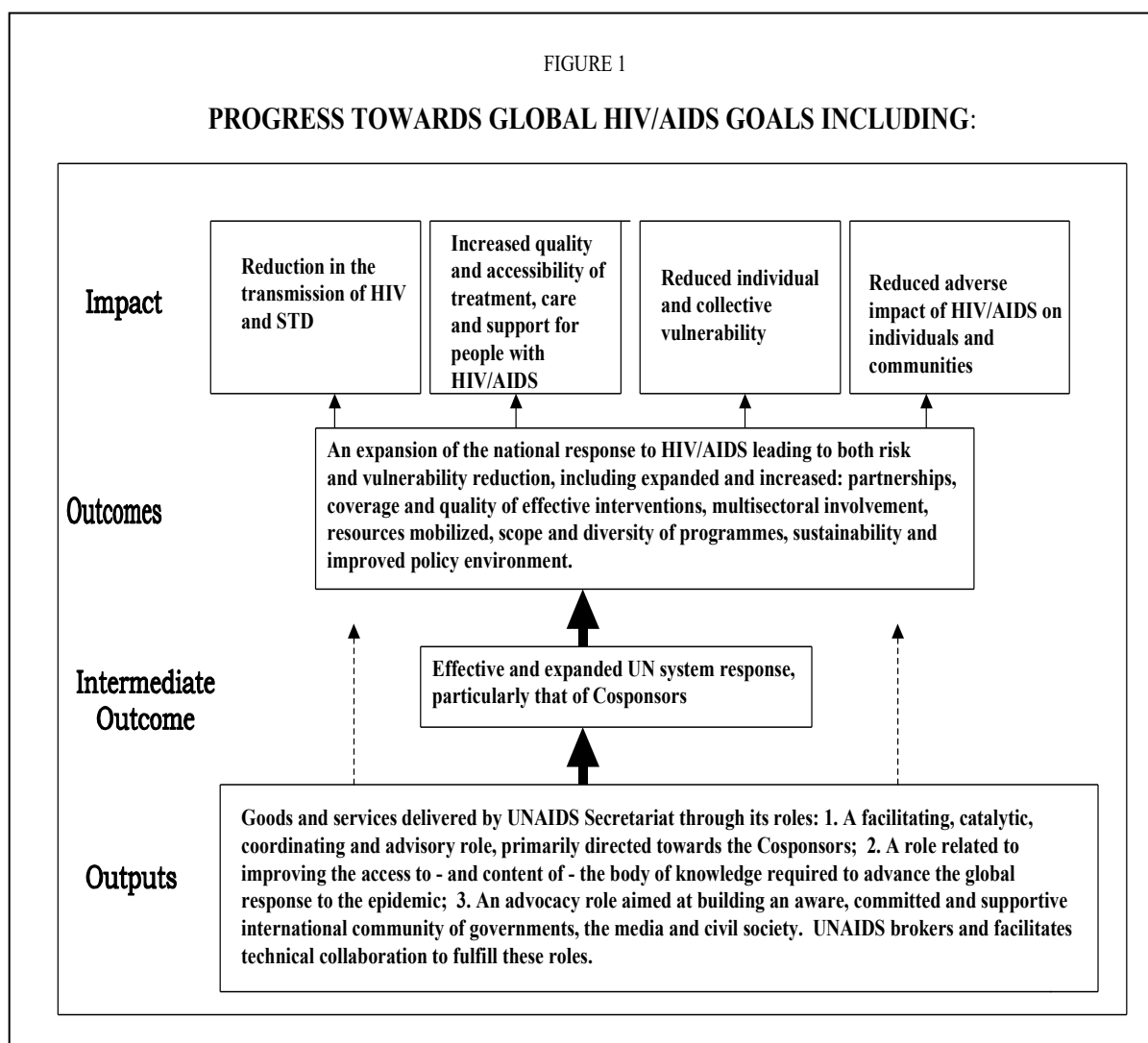
UNAIDS/PCB (4)/97.5, "Progress Report on UNAIDS Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan", 24 February 1997.

UNAIDS/PCB (4)/97.5 Add.1, "Report of the PCB Working Group on Indicators and Evaluation", 4 March 1997

"Issues Paper: UNAIDS Programme Co-ordinating Board Working Group on Indicators and Evaluation", April 1996

II. PROGRESS

3. The review of progress and the design of the comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan for UNAIDS for the biennium is based on the conceptual framework that was summarized in the Proposed Programme Budget and Workplan for 1998-1999. The framework follows a logic model. There is a causal link between the *outputs* of the UNAIDS Secretariat, the *outcomes* that are the national response to HIV/AIDS stimulated by the coordinated UN response, and the *impact* which is the reduction of disease transmission and the mitigation of adverse consequences of HIV/AIDS.



A. IMPACT MONITORING: EPIDEMIOLOGICAL INFORMATION SYSTEM

4. Substantial progress has been made along the lines of basic principles laid out by the PCB Working Group². First, a great deal of ground has been covered in the global monitoring of impact. The levels of HIV prevalence in different regions, countries and communities, and especially the number of new infections, are among the most powerful indicators for monitoring both the needs for strengthened programmes and the overall success of programme activities over time. UNAIDS, together with WHO and a series of partners – United States Agency for International Development (USAID), United States Bureau of the Census (USBC), Harvard University, East West Centre, and Monitoring the AIDS Pandemic (MAP) Network – has invested a considerable amount of effort to strengthening the structures and systems for collecting, collating and disseminating information for an improved understanding of the levels, dynamics and determinants of the epidemic in different regions and countries. Epidemiological fact sheets have been created in close collaboration with 213 National AIDS Programmes. These fact sheets include a wealth of information on the status and the trends of the epidemic in countries as well as on factors of risk and vulnerability in different populations. As the epidemic is well into its second decade in most parts of the world, data were available on approximately 90 countries and allowed country by country modelling. Further efforts were geared towards compiling all information available on risk behaviour, such as non-regular partnerships and condom use, or on knowledge about preventive measures. This compilation was shared with the National AIDS Programmes for their final review and completion. Although many countries did not have all the data requested, the exercise of putting together a package of relevant information for decision-making was highly appreciated by programme managers and also will serve to guide future work – one of the main goals of the exercise.

5. The epidemiological fact sheets have been finalized and will be shared with National AIDS Programmes, Theme Groups, Cosponsors and other major partners in June 1998. It is foreseen that this will be an additional incentive for programme managers to work towards an improved basis for decision-making and will therefore directly link into strategic planning efforts.

B. OUTCOME LEVEL: THEME GROUP AND UNITED NATIONS COORDINATED RESPONSE ASSESSMENTS

6. At the outcome level, as a result of a series of country consultations, a framework for coordination (Attachment I) has been developed to assess the functioning of Theme Groups and the coordinated UN response in countries. The framework is a very comprehensive one but measures only *normative coordination* between cosponsors. It needs to be further developed in order also to measure *functional coordination*, including conflict resolution, consensus-building, pace of decision-making, and flexibility of action by each Cosponsor.

² These principles include: a) assess short-, medium-, and long-term performance and reflect areas in which UNAIDS plays a direct and an indirect role; b) structure performance assessment around the four medium-term objectives which serve as the core of the UNAIDS programme; c) assess activities that UNAIDS undertakes in the short term, as well as the longer-term trends in the pandemic, its impact and consequences; d) work with Cosponsors to develop a mechanism to evaluate HIV/AIDS activities undertaken jointly or separately; e) design performance information that serves as a management tool for UNAIDS and a governance tool for the PCB.

7. Another achievement is the systematic effort to assess the Theme Groups by user satisfaction surveys. Three of these have taken place since 1996. The report of the 1996 Theme Group assessment reveals that the first year of this experience is marked with both successes and constraints. Among the positive developments were the strong commitment to coordination and good working relationships among Theme Group member agencies, as well as the strong support and involvement of Cosponsor country representatives, including the UN Resident Coordinators. One of the obstacles reported was related to the capacity of the UN system at country level to handle this new role. Another major constraint indicated was the lack of support from the headquarters of the UN organizations involved.

8. On the basis of the experience of the first Theme Group assessment, the 1997 Theme Group assessment included two separate questionnaires. In addition to a questionnaire aimed at monitoring the *modus operandi* of the Theme Groups and the progress of joint planning and coordinated action, a second questionnaire was developed on the national response in general. This questionnaire was sent to major partners in the national response, including the UN, the government, major donors in the country and major NGOs. It set out to capture the perceptions of *all* the partners about each other. It is expected that this exercise will provide UNAIDS with information that will enable it to better understand the current status of individual Theme Groups and the environment in which they function.

C. OUTPUT LEVEL: UNAIDS SECRETARIAT

9. At the output level, the roles and responsibilities of the UNAIDS Secretariat have been better defined as the initial steps towards marking the boundaries of accountability. Eleven core functions of the Secretariat were determined. Included among the main functions are: policy and political guidance; support in strategic planning to governments and Theme Groups; identification, development and dissemination of best practices globally, and the provision of policy advice; development of technical resource networks; advocacy at global and regional levels; tracking the epidemic and the response, as well as monitoring and evaluation of UNAIDS, and support to Country Programme Advisors.

10. Finally, progress has been made on strengthening the Epidemiology and Monitoring and Evaluation Team. A monitoring and evaluation adviser, a second epidemiologist and a support staff member have joined in the first quarter of 1998. Action is being taken to recruit another monitoring and evaluation adviser.

III. COMPREHENSIVE UNAIDS MONITORING AND EVALUATION WORKPLAN 1998-1999

11. The overall purpose of the Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan is to provide the PCB, the Committee of Cosponsoring Organizations, Cosponsors, governments, and NGOs with coherent information that will facilitate more effective governance, oversight and strategic management. Most important, however, is the purpose of setting up systematic efforts to enable the users of information at different levels to carry out *self-corrective* measures.

A. MONITORING AND EVALUATION REFERENCE GROUP

12. It is essential to set the stage for transparency and encourage feedback from other organizations and bodies in order to complete the framework for monitoring and evaluation. A Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group (MERG) consisting of Cosponsors, donors, universities, research institutions and governments is being formed. One of the most important functions of the MERG will be to advise the Executive Director of UNAIDS on the technical and managerial aspects of performance monitoring and evaluation. Within this framework, the main output expected from the group will be ongoing technical review of the tools, indicators, quantitative and qualitative research, indexes, guidelines and evaluation reports.

B. STRATEGIES OF THE WORKPLAN

13. **One strategy is to balance quantitative and qualitative techniques of evaluation. For example, while at global level the Theme Group effectiveness in promoting expanded country response is measured annually by two surveys, at national level a number of in-depth assessments, mainly using qualitative techniques, will be made.**

14. **Another strategy, which is the natural outcome of the general spirit and mandate of UNAIDS itself, is to have interagency collaboration in planning, implementing and evaluating the activities foreseen in the Workplan. This is the underlying reason for establishing the MERG. Cost-sharing is another manifestation of collaboration that is apparent in more than half of the activities planned.**

C. MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF HIV/AIDS GOALS (IMPACT)

PRODUCTION OF INDICATORS AND FRAMEWORK FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION:

15. The objective of this activity is to develop a framework and to set indicators to improve results-oriented monitoring and evaluation of national HIV/AIDS/STD programmes. This will be done through a joint exercise by a number of developing countries and international organizations. It will result in improved availability, accuracy and reliability of data for monitoring the progress and evaluating the costs and effectiveness of interventions on HIV/AIDS/STD control. The indicators will be used in existing data gathering instruments such as the Demographic and Health Survey, UNAIDS Fact Sheets, Country Profiles, and national Health Information System reports, as well as in in-depth impact evaluation studies. The time frame and partnerships for this and the following activities are in Attachment 2.

Care and support indicators

16. This activity, which will basically be carried out by **WHO**, will also be linked to the overall framework of indicators mentioned above. The process will involve both reviewing the four existing care and support indicators and developing new ones. As the pandemic creates large numbers of people living with HIV/AIDS, it is important to address methodological issues of care and support.

Indicators of poverty and gender

17. This activity will be carried out in partnership with the **UNDP** Office of Evaluation and Strategic Planning, and the related sections on gender and poverty. There is background evidence from research that poverty and women's empowerment are closely linked to vulnerability and risk behaviour in relation to HIV/AIDS. However, these concepts are too broad to be of operational use. It is important to find out which aspects of poverty lead to, or prepare the ground for, high-risk behaviour. The next step is to identify which indicator reflects this. Then there is the need to find the critical intermediary mechanisms that are the determinants of behaviour, and the corresponding indicators. Many "poverty elimination" programme evaluations found that the relationship between poverty and behaviour is not always straightforward. This is also the case with the arguments about women's empowerment. Therefore the purpose of this activity will be to produce the most relevant indicators of poverty and gender empowerment at both micro and macro levels.

Indicators on preventive aspects and impact mitigation of HIV/AIDS on children and mothers

18. Women and children are heavily affected by HIV/AIDS, especially in societies where prevalence of the disease is high. For example, mother-to-child transmission of HIV has become a major cause of infant and child mortality.

19. In addition, young sex workers and street children are very vulnerable to HIV infection. Furthermore there have been questions about the validity and reliability of the measures used. For example, it may be argued that, in situations where the "number of street children" is unreliable, "the number of *sites* in big cities where the street children concentrate" may be more relevant and reliable as a proxy indicator that would have more significant implications *vis à vis* planning and interventions. Thus, further work is necessary on the aspects of the daily life of street children and child sex workers.

20. The consequences of AIDS also have wider implications for societies, over and above the loss of the persons with the disease. The number of orphans and widows increases dramatically because of the loss of close relatives due to AIDS. Therefore valid, reliable and sensitive indicators are required to assess where a society stands in catering to the needs of these emerging groups. This set of activities will be implemented jointly with **UNICEF**.

D. MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE UN SYSTEM AND THE NATIONAL RESPONSE: OUTCOME

ACTIVITIES OF GLOBAL RELEVANCE

Development and testing of an HIV/AIDS country programme effort index

21. UNAIDS will support the existing plans of the FUTURES group with Tulane University, USA, and Horizons Project, USA, who will work on developing and testing the HIV/AIDS country programme index. This index would be analogous to the Family Planning Programme Effort Index. The HIV/AIDS programme effort score would aim to measure the strength of the country-level response to the epidemic. This score will serve to compare programmes by relative strength, to correlate changes in HIV prevalence with programme effort, to indicate the areas where programmes are strongest and those where they are weakest, and to track changes over time. FUTURES has recently developed an AIDS Policy Environment Score (PES) that can be used to measure the extent to which the policy environment supports an effective and humane response to the AIDS epidemic. This score has been applied in a number of countries. However, before it can be replicated on a global scale, some methodological issues have to be fully explored. These include: the best method for collecting the information required, the most relevant set of criteria to judge the PES, the extent to which quantitative information should be used to score some of the items, and the extent to which the PES can be used to measure change over time. There should also be methodological focus on the problem of implementing a universally objective tool in situations where progress, in relation to each country's starting point, could be more significant than indicated by the intercountry comparison.

Global assessments of Theme Group functioning

22. Two surveys are being carried out annually to measure the effectiveness of Theme Groups in facilitating and coordinating the UN system response to HIV/AIDS. The first survey is given to Theme Group chairs and country programme advisers or UNAIDS focal points. The questionnaire aims to measure Cosponsor participation and Theme Group chair functions, sharing of Theme Group administrative costs and managerial and operational aspects of Theme Groups and Technical Groups which provide and coordinate technical assistance to countries. Also included in these questionnaires are topics related to the integrated Workplan of the Cosponsors, communication and involvement of governments, advocacy, status of the national strategic plan, and resource mobilization.

23. The subjects of the second survey are the key national partners in the national government, civil society, bilateral agencies and UN agencies. The questionnaire sets out to capture user perceptions of the roles played by different partners in putting into effect an expanded response to HIV/AIDS. This will enable a 360-degree evaluation as each partner assesses each other with respect to commitment level, coordination, resource allocation, and participation in the national strategic plan. These surveys will continue to be repeated annually.

ACTIVITIES AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Rapid assessments of Theme Groups and UN and national response in selected countries

24. These assessments will provide an in-depth picture of most of the issues covered in the Theme Group assessment. They will trace the follow-on effects of motions created by the Theme Groups up to the level of the beneficiary. They will also cover the scope, nature and outcomes of the expanded response. The purpose is to complement the Theme Group assessment surveys through the use of qualitative and quantitative techniques in order to understand the processes and the underlying causes behind the situation, as depicted by the two surveys, at global level.

Development of a checklist for qualitative Theme Group and UN response assessment

25. On the basis of the experience of the Theme Group surveys and the initial rapid assessment exercises, a checklist will be developed to assist consultants and teams who will be carrying out assessments in other countries, as well as staff of UNAIDS and Cosponsors. This will be a bridge between global activities and national ones, and will enable studies to be replicated elsewhere after being adapted accordingly. The checklist will not be a methodological guide but will provide a framework to ensure that all issues related to effectiveness of Theme Groups and the expanded national response are covered.

Thematic evaluation of selected aspects of risk and vulnerability reduction interventions

26. Thematic evaluations of selected areas of intervention regarding vulnerability and risk reduction will be done in each region. These evaluations will provide a comparative view of the lessons learned from the experience of different countries within each region, *focusing on one particular subject area (theme)*. The selected theme will centre on the most common or most critical interventions in the regions, covering a number of countries. For example, it is widely assumed that income generation projects or credit schemes will reduce prostitution. An evaluation synthesizing the experience of different countries within the same region in this regard may help find out the extent to which this generalization is true, or it may reveal the conditions under which it is valid.

Preparation of the guidelines on monitoring and evaluation of responses resulting from National Strategic Planning

27. The Department of National Strategic Planning of the UNAIDS Secretariat is presently engaged in producing a series of guidelines on National Strategic Planning. The guidelines that have been prepared so far refer to situation analysis, response analysis, formulation of a strategic plan, and resource mobilization. A fifth module to be prepared by the Epidemiology and Monitoring and Evaluation Team will deal with the evaluation of expanded responses resulting from a national strategic plan.

28. As a corollary to this activity, one of the team members will participate in the Strategic Planning interdepartmental team at the UNAIDS Secretariat, and will take a proactive role in the assessment (case studies) of the strategic planning process in two out of six countries – Burkina Faso, China, Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Morocco, Romania – planned by the Department of National Strategic Planning.

E. ACTIVITIES AT THE OUTPUT LEVEL (UNAIDS SECRETARIAT): PROCESS EVALUATION OF THE BEST PRACTICES COLLECTION

29. The “Best Practices” collection, consisting of a series of technical updates, points of view, key materials, a set of presentation graphics and case studies, is one of the major outputs of the Secretariat. Ranging from blood safety to community mobilization, the collection covers some 50 topics. It is distributed to country programme advisers, focal points, Theme Group chairs, Cosponsors, donors, PCB members and key partners in the countries. According to the feedback from the field, supply of the technical updates on Refugees and Community Mobilisation already falls behind the demand.

30. Although it is too early to measure the effect of the “Best Practices” collection on the ultimate impact, i.e. the reduction of the transmission of HIV/AIDS, the time is ripe for evaluating the overall process. At this stage, we can mainly measure *exposure* of the target audiences and the public to the contents and messages in the collection, rather than understand the degree to which the collection has led to behaviour change. To this end, a process evaluation is planned that will highlight the following: the efficiency of distribution from the Centre to the periphery; the extent to which the collection is read by the target audiences, quoted in other publications and the press, or referred to on radio and television; and whether the “Best Practices” collection has been translated into local or national languages.

31. Evaluating the intermediary mechanisms in relation to processes is also significant. It is important to know, for example, if the distribution of the “Best Practices” collection is supported simultaneously with other communication channels and tools, such as press conferences, and messages on radio and television. Another point of interest is the degree to which the collection has affected national strategic plans and policies in relation to HIV/AIDS.

32. This exercise will also be useful in developing impact indicators and tools for future use.