

Strategic repositioning of the UNAIDS Secretariat

Delivering on the Fast-Track strategy and
the Sustainable Development Goals



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THE CONTEXT

POSITIONING UNAIDS IN A CHANGING WORLD

The transformative 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals - including the goal of ending the AIDS epidemic as a public health threat by 2030 - has provided a historic opportunity to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change - to ensure that no one is left behind. Adopted by the General Assembly in September 2015, the Agenda demands integration, inclusivity, collective and people-centered action from all stakeholders, and a UN system that is more strategic, coherent, nimble, and results-oriented.

At the same time, tightening financial pressures influenced by the global immigration crisis, economic downturns, and political shifts in a number of countries, among other factors, have had a significant impact on the availability of development resources from key donors. For a number of major financing partners, this has led to cuts in development assistance to UN organizations across the system.

Recognising early the demands and opportunities presented by the ambitious sustainable development, UNAIDS put before its Programme Coordinating Board (PCB) in October 2015, its 2016-2021 Strategy which aims to end the AIDS epidemic as a public health threat by 2030 by Fast-Tracking the response. The Strategy - the first adopted by any UN system body since the adoption of the Agenda 2030 and fully aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals - promotes accelerated action and investment over the next five years to enable the ending of the AIDS epidemic as a global health threat by 2030. Emphasizing the confidence in UNAIDS to deliver results, the PCB adopted an accompanying unified budget, results and accountability framework to operationalize the Strategy.

“The UNAIDS Secretariat has undertaken a strategic repositioning exercise to ensure that it remains focused on mandate and strategy while delivering results.”

The 2016 Political Declaration on Ending AIDS called on UNAIDS to support Member States in addressing the social, economic, political and structural barriers, including the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, and human rights of the AIDS epidemic to achieve multiple development outcomes. It also recognized the new face of the AIDS epidemic - success in saving lives but failing in stopping new infections among adults. It called for Fast-Tracking the AIDS response in the next five years through decisive, inclusive and accountable leadership. Failing to do so could enable the epidemic to rebound in many countries and not meet the ultimate target of ending AIDS by 2030.

However, at the end of 2015, UNAIDS was faced with a significant, and unforeseen financial gap. Financial constraints, largely related to migration, experienced by a number of UNAIDS major European development partners led to a sudden 30% shortfall against the approved budget for the Joint Programme.

Thus, in direct response to the changing political and financial environment within which it finds itself, the UNAIDS Secretariat - the centre of the Joint Programme - has undertaken a strategic repositioning exercise to ensure that it remains focused on mandate and strategy while delivering results.



THE OBJECTIVES FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT IN THE NEW ENVIRONMENT

A dual-track agenda of repositioning to leverage the opportunity costs of the changing environment, while undertaking intensive advocacy to recover and increase funding for the Joint Programme, has been driven by several key objectives.

FULL ALIGNMENT WITH THE SDGS

The SDGs and the AIDS response are indivisible and inseparable. Success in both is only possible when there is joint and parallel progress across all the SDGs. Building on the aligned Strategy 2016-2020, the repositioning seeks to further consolidate with the central tenets of the 2030 Agenda to foster social transformation and ensure no one is left behind.

ORGANIZATION AROUND FAST-TRACK RESULTS

The Fast-Track approach relies on a differentiated response from the Secretariat that takes into epidemic realities and ensures the right people in the right place at the right time. Through the repositioning the Secretariat aims to strengthen leadership and teams in Fast-Track priority countries and regions. Combining this approach with an understanding of geopolitical structures will provide innovative solutions and opportunities for tailoring responses that leverage and strengthen existing institutions and political structures as well as promoting accountability for results.

STRENGTHENING OF THE JOINT PROGRAMME

The only cosponsored Joint Programme in the UN system, UNAIDS is an example of a collaborative, multisectoral response to a complex and multifaceted issue, and UN reform in action. The success of the Joint Programme hinges on leveraging the wide expertise, capacity, relationships and networks available with its Secretariat, constituent Cosponsors and the wider UN system. A focused, streamlined and effective Secretariat is critical for ongoing momentum and results.

ENHANCED ENGAGEMENT WITH UN REFORM

Already a pioneer within the UN system for differentiated ways of working, UNAIDS continues to strive to be a leader in UN reform efforts. ECOSOC has repeatedly indicated that UNAIDS offers the UN system a useful example for the post-2015 period, of enhanced strategic coherence, coordination, results-based focus, inclusive governance and country-level impact, based on national contexts and priorities.

OPERATION WITHIN A COST-CONTAINED ENVIRONMENT

Rationalizing and reducing management costs and demonstrating value for money have been key priorities for UNAIDS for several years. The Executive Director led an exercise in 2011, following the approval of the Getting to Zero strategy, resulting in a major realignment of field focus and significant cost savings. The current repositioning seeks to continue to build on this approach which has allowed the Secretariat to hold its budgets constant over the past eight years while consistently helping deliver extraordinary progress in the global response to HIV.

IMPLEMENTING CHANGE WITH A HUMAN FACE

Management changes have always been driven by consistent principles – avoiding unnecessary disruption and distraction while focusing on driving change through periodic reviews of the UNAIDS Strategy and the requirements for effective execution. Central to all change has been the driver to ensure that it is people-centred - providing staff with opportunities and options, to move and grow inside and outside the organization.



THE PROCESS

INCLUSIVE, COMPREHENSIVE, TRANSPARENT

As a knowledge-based organization, the most valuable resource of the UNAIDS Secretariat is the expertise, skills, experience and motivation of its staff.

The strategic repositioning in 2016-2017 builds on the Secretariat's realignment strategy that was initiated in 2011 which enabled overall cost reductions of 20%, or US\$ 48 million, in the 2012-2013 biennium. Monitoring and adjustment in the intervening period has continued to ensure efficiency, streamlining and value for money: UNAIDS expenditures have been reduced by 23%, or US\$ 69 million, between 2014-2016.

A comprehensive repositioning exercise took place through an inclusive and transparent process, from April to December 2016, with implementation through mid-2017. Workforce reductions have been managed, where possible, through retirements, voluntary separations and departures. Where there have been exceptions, senior management and the human resources department have worked closely with the UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association (USSA) and career counsellors to provide affected staff the maximum information and support as possible.

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Key steps in the repositioning exercise during 2016:



FEBRUARY

In February staff interested in looking at other opportunities outside of the organization were given the opportunity to Separate through Mutual Agreement (SMA). This was the first of three rounds of SMA during the year (August and November).



APRIL

Following initial data analysis and senior management discussion, the Executive Director convened an Expanded Mobility and Rotation Committee (EMRC) in April - including additional representation from the field and the USSA - to facilitate an inclusive and consultative process for the preparation of repositioning proposals for Cabinet.

Under the EMRC, chaired by the Deputy Executive Directors, two working groups looked at the UNAIDS field and headquarters footprint respectively, with a third running a highly interactive process, whereby some 100 staff provided suggestions on how to improve ways of working.

Both the field and HQ groups applied the same considerations when developing their proposals - these included a review of positions against the requirements of the UNAIDS Strategy and the SDG agenda. An analysis of deliverables and functions informed the identification of staffing requirements with a view to re-profiling and streamlining positions and structures. In order to limit the impact on service staff, vacant positions, or those becoming vacant through attrition, were prioritized for abolition.



SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

During the months of September and October, an expanded Cabinet held several meetings to consider the proposals arising from the EMRC. To ensure transparency in the process the Chair of the USSA was invited to attend. The Executive Director's decisions on structure, reprofiling and post abolitions were communicated to affected staff by their managers at the end of October.



NOVEMBER

- To facilitate the broadest pool of candidates and positions the repositioning exercise was combined with the 2016 mobility exercise. The Mobility and Rotation Committee (MRC) met and, subsequent to decisions by the Executive Director, on waiver requests in the mobility exercise, a Compendium of all available international positions (124) was published in early November. In the interests of fairness and creating as wide an opportunity for all affected staff, the Executive Director decided that, on an exceptional basis, all affected staff, regardless of their employment status or length of service, would be able to apply for positions in the Compendium. This resulted in 146 staff eligible to make applications.
- Functional organograms were published on 21 November and the final round of SMA came to a close.



DECEMBER

The EMRC met on 9/10 December and made recommendations to the Executive Director regarding the placement of staff. Decisions on individual staff placements were made by the Executive Director and affected staff were informed.

Throughout the entire period there was ongoing communication with all staff, extensive change and career support from the human resources department, and a mutually supportive, quality working relationship with a highly engaged USSA. In 2016 - in addition to a dedicated Senior Management Team retreat - several Branch and Town Hall meetings were held, and eight all-staff messages were sent out, as well as a series of information notes from human resources.

STAFF SUPPORT SYSTEMS

A key success factor for the organizational repositioning was the active engagement of staff through a range of information, awareness-raising and support initiatives. Four separate activities were organized for staff throughout the repositioning process:

- Briefings for senior managers were conducted for all headquarters and field directors. The sessions enabled directors to support their teams and ensure that they had the information and tools to navigate through the repositioning. The sessions provided background, covered the process for supporting their staff, and also gave director's tools and techniques for talking to affected staff.
- Training sessions on adapting to change were offered to all staff, and were designed to enable staff to leverage the change as an opportunity for career development and progression.
- Targeted briefings for staff involved in the mobility exercise or reassignment process introduced staff to the compendium of vacant positions and described the new functions that had been created, including the roles of Fast-Track and Global Fund/PEPFAR Advisers. Staff were also shown how to complete the application form, including tips for drafting an effective motivation statement and for updating their online CVs.
- Individual career counselling sessions were launched for staff members affected by position abolition. The sessions were delivered in English, French and Spanish by certified career counsellors. Participants were guided to reflect on their respective careers and identify their strengths, skills, values, interests, capacity and possibilities for the future. At the end of the sessions the staff member develops an action plan to complement improved CVs, cover letters, and social media profiles.



THE RESULTS



A REALIGNED STRUCTURE

The repositioning exercise has prioritized strengthening of the largely field-based Secretariat. The 70:30 ratio for field: headquarters has been maintained.

Countries

Emphasis has been placed on consolidation around the core functions and added-value of the Secretariat; to favour national staff capacity when possible and appropriate; and, to reinforce the principles of the Joint Programme and the Division of Labour. This includes varied ways of providing support to countries, such as from a neighbouring country or Regional Support Team (RST).

Changes in staff distribution at country level and reprofiling of positions, based on epidemic priorities, better reflect the type of UNAIDS presence needed: the right people, in the right place. This has resulted in the creation of new functions - Fast-Track, Community Support and Global Fund/PEPFAR Advisers - all of which recognize the Secretariat's role in supporting and maximizing the role of all stakeholders in the national response. Similarly, roles where UNAIDS Secretariat continues to add value were retained, such as Strategic Information Advisers. And potentially duplicative roles were removed - this does not mean that UNAIDS no longer prioritizes these aspects of the response, rather that others have the mandate and may be better placed to cover these issues.

Future adjustments to staff deployments will consider overall capacities in a given country, to ensure complementarity between Cosponsors and Secretariat roles and greater differentiation between countries

Regions

In all regions, a smaller, flatter and more country-focused RST will provide political and intellectual leadership as well as technical support commensurate to the epidemiological and programmatic needs of each region. Both eastern and southern, and eastern and central Africa have been strengthened - accounting for almost two-thirds of Secretariat staff - as the regions with the highest HIV burden globally and the most Fast Track priority countries.

Headquarters

A streamlined and revamped headquarters will provide more focused leadership and strengthen coherence across the Secretariat, eliminating silos, duplication and overlap of tasks and responsibilities. Simpler and faster business processes, and strengthened accountability and evaluation mechanisms, will drive the delivery of results. Enhanced focus on Fast-Track, Partnerships and Community Support, Social Justice and Inclusion and Governance and Multilateral Affairs - through dedicated departments - will link stakeholders across the SDGs, and build strategic alliances for collaborative efforts in supporting both national and global responses.



AN AGILE AND FLEXIBLE WORKFORCE

The repositioning exercise has so far resulted in a workforce reduction of 13%, from 810 staff at the beginning of 2016 to 708 in April 17 2017. Particular focus was placed on:

- Maintaining the 70:30 ratio for field:headquarters staffing
- Flatter structures, with a 21% reduction in posts at the D level and above
- Gender parity - 40% of UCDs and, 48% of staff in the grades P4 and above are women. 1 in 3 female Secretariat staff have benefited from the leadership and mentoring programmes

- Career development - The majority of moves have been lateral, providing staff with opportunities to work across regions and sections within the organization. Fifteen staff have been promoted and 10 national officers/temporary staff have been able to move to international professional positions



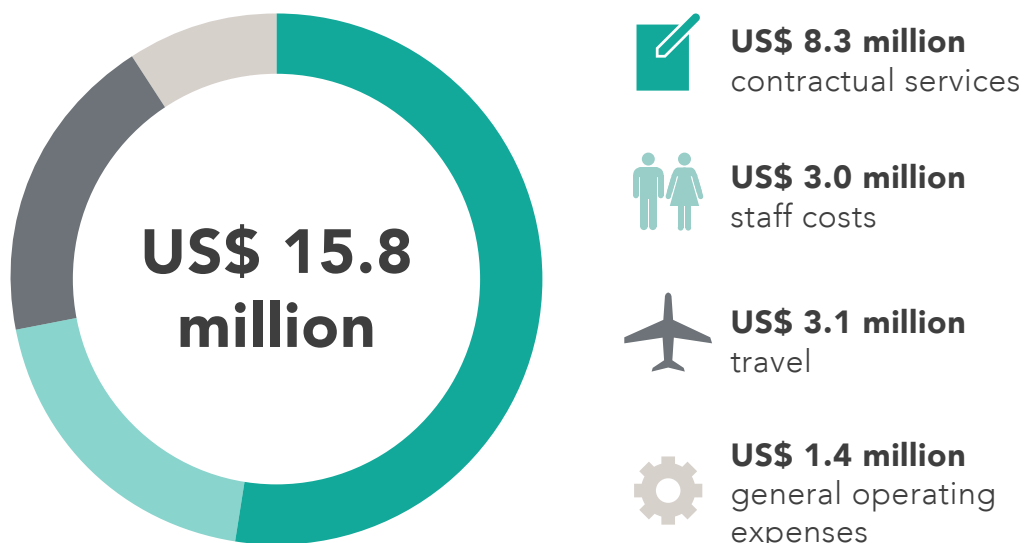
COST SAVINGS AND EFFICIENCIES

For much of 2016, core income for the year was projected at US\$ 168 million, a shortfall of more than 30% compared to the approved budget. This was despite the strong support for the AIDS response and the Joint Programme expressed in the adoption of the UNAIDS 2016-2021 Strategy in October 2015, and at the UN High Level Meeting and the PCB, both in June 2016.

Following intense advocacy by the Executive Director, towards the end of 2016, several donors provided additional funding to UNAIDS and in the end US\$ 180 million was raised against the core budget – US\$ 12 million more than the original projection, but still a 25% gap against the approved budget.

Through the repositioning exercise and related organizational change efforts, UNAIDS Secretariat core expenditures were reduced by more than US\$ 15 million or 10% in 2016 against a PCB approved budget of US\$ 155 million.

Cost reductions and savings against core budget in 2016





NEW WAYS OF WORKING

Drawing on suggestions from an all-staff consultation during the repositioning exercise, and through the development of a management plan, efforts will focus on innovations around four main themes:

- **Fast-Track teams**

More and better use of cross-Secretariat, thematic teams on all areas of work to leverage individual staff expertise and experience. This will help to break silos and remove duplication, and will support UNAIDS to become a learning organization with evolving expertise.

- **Cultivating expertise**

The online performance monitoring tool continues to provide a meaningful appraisal process where staff feedback has shown a much more positive and dynamic engagement with supervisors on performance. With the ongoing staff realignment this will be particularly important as staff can be assessed for suitability against a new role and personal development plans adapted accordingly.

- **Enabling workplace**

Flexible, duty of care, work/life balance support, mobile working, short-term country assignments, transparency on costs, less outsourcing, travel policy strengthened, and enhanced staff responsibility for resource mobilization.

- **Equipping to deliver**

Business systems are needed that can support staff to deliver on results, wherever they are located. A number of ICT tools have been introduced to improve efficiency and collaboration. The launch of the online iTrack tool has streamlined the quality compliance check for financial transactions and has enabled the electronic storage of all information. UNAIDS Connect brings together headquarters and field contact information hence sharing and optimizing the information we collectively hold. The Secretariat move to cloud-based computing has transformed ways of working and serves as a model of innovation in the UN system.



IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the repositioning is proceeding in a phased manner, in accordance with a change management plan, both to accommodate to the extent possible individual staff needs, and also to allow for changes to systems and tools. To ensure alignment with budget and staff performance management cycles, the new organizational structure came into effect by the end of April 2017. Staff movements are scheduled to be completed by mid-year 2017.

Support for staff to transition into their new roles and to position them to meet their new priorities and expectations, includes:

- **Leadership support for heads of UNAIDS country offices**
Building on the series of webinars for UNAIDS Country Directors and Managers, additional webinars were provided, including a session in late February on accelerating the Fast-Track approach at country level. In addition, colleagues taking on the head of office role for the first time in 2017 will benefit from one-on-one mentoring with an experienced Country Director, as well as an induction programme offered following their first few months on the job.
- **Communities of practice for key functions**
With the creation of new functions such as Fast-Track Adviser, Global Fund/PEPFAR Adviser, Community Support Adviser, HRM is working with stakeholders from new departments in the Programme Branch to create a sense of community and familiarize colleagues with the expectations related to their function. This will facilitate the establishment of virtual teams that will provide support and the sharing of technical guidance across all duty stations.

- **Team building skills for managers**

Virtual workshops are being organized for managers and other colleagues leading teams to build their skills to facilitate team building interventions. These interventions will support the formation of collaborative work relationships, trust and accelerate team building.

Concurrently with the organizational repositioning, the Executive Director had convened, with the UN Development Group Chair Helen Clark, a review of the Joint Programme operating model, with a panel co-chaired Awa Coll-Seck, Minister of Health, Senegal, and Lennarth Hjelmåker, Ambassador for Global Health, Sweden. This review was an integral part of the ongoing efforts to ensure that UNAIDS is best positioned to deliver on the UNAIDS Fast Track Strategy, the 2016 Political Declaration on AIDS, the 2030 Agenda, and the requirements of the 2016 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of operational activities for development.

Together, the strategic repositioning of the UNAIDS Secretariat and the refined operating model should ensure that UNAIDS remains in the vanguard of UN reform.



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