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## Progress in building competence of the UN and its staff to respond to HIV/AIDS

**Did you know that the UN HIV/AIDS learning strategy is supported at by the highest levels in the UN system? And that there are 64 UN HIV/AIDS learning facilitators already trained from 35 countries and 10 UN agencies? Did you know that these facilitators will be working with country teams to find ways to increase HIV/AIDS knowledge, both among professional colleagues working on programmes, and for all staff in addressing HIV/AIDS in their own lives? Are you aware that a facilitators guide is nearing completion? And that an updated booklet on HIV/AIDS for staff members and their families is almost ready? And have you heard about the successful pilot to help Theme Groups build their capacity to work better to support national HIV/AIDS efforts? Read more below!**

The UN learning strategy on HIV/AIDS supports learning approaches that will make the UN more knowledgeable and competent in its work, both with partners and with our own staff, to: ♦ help prevent and control the spread of HIV; ♦ ensure effective care, support and treatment for those infected or affected by HIV/AIDS; ♦ eliminate stigma and discrimination against those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS; and ♦ mitigate the impact of the epidemic.

In September 2003, **Info Note 1** described the strategy in more detail; this second Info Note reports on progress made since then.

**1) Support from the highest levels.** Since its inception, the learning strategy has been supported directly and indirectly at the highest levels in the UN system. In December 2003, the Secretary General issued a bulletin stating “United Nations staff and their families will have access to information and education about HIV/AIDS.” In November 2003, Mark Malloch Brown, Chair of the UN Development Group, issued a note to all Resident Coordinators and UN agency heads at country level on HIV/AIDS

highlighting that “The UN Country Team is expected to implement the UN learning strategy on HIV/AIDS. This includes learning related to HIV/AIDS in the UN workplace, as well as ensuring that professional staff are competent to implement initiatives related to supporting national responses to HIV/AIDS.”

Further, Peter Piot wrote to each of the Executive Heads of the Cosponsors calling on their “support in the deployment stage of this important initiative” including “engaging ...senior managers to reach the expected outcomes.” A number of agency Executive Heads have since expressed their full support.

**2) Training of HIV/AIDS learning facilitators.** In the last quarter of 2003, two workshops were held to prepare the first contingent of HIV/AIDS learning facilitators. 32 people attended a workshop in Russia covering Central and Eastern Europe and 32 more people attended a workshop in Namibia covering Eastern and Southern Africa. Agencies represented included UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, ILO, WHO, WFP, UNHCR, the

UN Secretariat and the UNAIDS Secretariat.

The high calibre facilitators, including programme and operations staff and representatives of staff associations, were all nominated by the UN Country Teams to represent the UN system in their respective countries. Most participants came in a team of two: one person who focussed on HIV/AIDS in the UN workplace and the other who focussed on learning to support to national responses to HIV/AIDS.



Facilitators for Central and Eastern Europe

***What will be the roles of the HIV/AIDS learning facilitators?*** It is expected that they will work with the UN Country Team and UNAIDS Country Coordinator to develop a plan to implement the learning strategy. They can then assist in organizing, implementing, evaluating and reporting on HIV/AIDS learning activities. While the facilitators will help drive the strategy, they should not carry out these functions alone -- rather they should be key members of a UN-appointed HIV/AIDS learning team to ensure quality learning.

The country facilitator teams prepared provisional implementation plans for the four months following the workshop and these will be closely monitored at regional level to ensure any needed support.

Other regions and headquarter locations will be covered later in 2004, starting with the Middle East and North Africa in March and West and Central Africa in May.



Facilitators for Eastern and Central Africa

- 3) Facilitators Guide to implement the learning strategy.** To help the HIV/AIDS learning facilitators as they work with country teams, an implementation Guide is in draft form. This includes chapters on planning HIV/AIDS learning and then includes a menu of learning approaches and activities. Given the differences among regions and countries, it is not possible to prescribe the same learning content, approaches and activities globally, so those included in the Guide will need to be selected and adapted at country level.

The Guide is now being finalised and will be ready in time for the March workshop in Egypt.

- 4) Updating the booklet on HIV/AIDS for UN employees and their families.** The current booklet on HIV/AIDS was published in 2000. Based on feedback from last year's learning needs assessment as well as extensive consultations with many UN agencies, it was decided to revise the booklet to provide updated information and to improve the content.

The new version is nearing completion and should be ready for distribution by April 2004. It will be distributed with a new

orientation guide so that the booklet can be introduced to staff members and their families in a forum in which they can learn interactively and have the opportunity to have their questions answered.

**5) Theme Group learning evaluated.**

The pilot project ‘Capacity Building of Theme Groups through Learning’ was evaluated at the end of 2003. This project was led by the UN System Staff College in partnership with UNAIDS and the World Bank’s Global Development Learning Network. Through a variety of learning approaches, 15 Theme Groups (TGs) in 5 regions were supported on UNGASS, resource mobilisation and advocacy. The project used a ‘blended’ learning approach: country-level activities, joint learning with other TGs via video learning, and the use of a web-based environment.

The evaluation found strengths in reaching a large number of people, using a mix of learning approaches and allowing exchanges among the TGs. Challenges remain including technological let-downs, some lack of motivation and the need to have strong Country Facilitators.

The lessons of the project are being built into the implementation of the learning strategy.

**Questions or comments about the UN HIV/AIDS Learning Strategy?**

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