

UNAIDS (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS)

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Author: Nancy A. Johnson , McMaster University

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Description Established in 1994 by a resolution of the UN Economic and Social Council and launched in January 1996, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) brought together initially six UN system organizations to respond to the AIDS pandemic. Those organizations were the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank. The creation of such a multi-agency program within the UN was an innovative step. It represented not only a scaled-up effort to address the growing AIDS pandemic by pooling the resources and expertise of the partners, but a recognition that HIV/AIDS was not just a "health problem." Rather, it is a problem rooted in a complex set of social, cultural, and economic circumstances, requiring multi-sectoral solutions. The original six partner organizations or "Cosponsors" have since been joined by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

UNAIDS is guided by a Programme Coordinating Board with representatives of twenty-two governments from various geographic regions, the ten Cosponsors, and five representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including associations of people living with HIV/AIDS. UNAIDS is neither a funding nor an implementing agency. Working principally at the country level and in developing countries, UNAIDS acts as a facilitator and advisor, brokering cooperation between national governments, civil society, the private sector, and donors to: galvanize political commitment to addressing HIV/AIDS; look at how policies and programs can be improved; find ways of achieving sustainable financing for prevention, treatment, and care; and link AIDS to the broader development agenda. The development and implementation of HIV/AIDS-related projects and programs rests with individual countries. Attracting money (principally from developed country governments) to fund projects in developing countries is a responsibility assigned by the international community to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (the "Global Fund"). Money from the Global Fund is disbursed through a grant application process. UNAIDS may provide technical assistance to countries and organizations in preparing grant applications.

Another key role of UNAIDS is monitoring and evaluation. UNAIDS compiles data on, and makes estimates about, HIV prevalence and

incidence rates, as well as numbers of AIDS deaths and children orphaned by the disease. Each year it publishes a *Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic* as well as a series of *Fact Sheets* containing the latest HIV/AIDS data for each major geographic region. Based on these data, it attempts to evaluate progress made towards achieving various UN goals with respect to treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS. UNAIDS also tracks the global flow of financial resources, identifying the amounts and sources of funding and looking at shared donor responsibility across national governments and the public and private sectors. On the other side of the ledger, it estimates the amounts of funding needed to continue to respond to the pandemic.

UNAIDS' third and foremost role is leadership and advocacy. Making HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment universally accessible for all who need them as a human right is at the centre of its advocacy efforts. In 2003, UNAIDS and WHO launched the "3 by 5" Campaign to provide three million people living with HIV/AIDS in low- and middle-income countries with life-prolonging antiretroviral treatment by the end of 2005. While this target was not met, UNAIDS continues to promote the Millennium Development Goal of halting and reversing the spread of AIDS by 2015 and to secure resolution on the blueprint for action set out in the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS (and revisited in June 2006 at the High Level Meeting on AIDS). UNAIDS is also a voice for country ownership in developing and implementing solutions to the AIDS pandemic and for the full participation of civil society in this process. More recently, UNAIDS has become an advocate for greater efficiency in HIV/AIDS funding and programming at the local and global levels so that duplication of effort and misspending is avoided.

As a multilateral organization with a strong leadership and advocacy role, UNAIDS, along with the Global Fund, permits the mobilization of states and non-governmental organizations on a scale that would have been much more difficult to reach in the absence of the organization. In this respect, political globalization creates the possibility of a more effective response to the pandemic. To the extent to which UNAIDS succeeds in this response, it creates conditions for individuals and communities to become more autonomous in designing and carrying out their own strategies to deal with the disease.

Suggested Reading: **UNAIDS website.** www.unaids.org (accessed 5 July 2006)