



# CRIS

COUNTRY RESPONSE INFORMATION SYSTEM

## CRIS Operations Guide



Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

**UNAIDS**

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## ❖ Background

At the close of the groundbreaking Special Session on HIV and AIDS of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGASS) 189 member states adopted the Declaration of Commitment on HIV and AIDS (DoC). The member states envisioned that the DoC would become an unprecedented tool to promote greater accountability and an outcome driven sense of urgency and solidarity in the fight against the epidemic. There was also recognition of the need for increased allocation and better use of resources in order to reach the goals agreed upon in the DoC.

Since the UNGASS DoC there has been increasing focus on developing successful monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems that will allow for the monitoring and evaluation of countries response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. UNAIDS supports countries in their efforts to improve their monitoring and evaluation systems. UNAIDS works with countries to strengthen and develop monitoring and evaluation frameworks in accordance with the Three Ones principles and has developed the Country Response Information System (CRIS) to provide countries with a relevant information system.<sup>1</sup> The CRIS has been developed as a means to strengthen country M&E systems, and supplement existing applications.

This document has been developed in support of M&E activities in countries. It addresses some of the issues to be considered when implementing CRIS in countries and includes an overview over the following issues:

- The role of information systems
- Integrating information systems
- Country operations guidelines
- Country example – CRIS in Botswana
- Technical support available to countries
- CRIS operations checklist

## ❖ The Role of Information Systems

Information systems can be powerful tools in strengthening the use of strategic information in countries and contribute to improving the response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Appropriate information systems facilitate the compilation, dissemination and analysis of data and thus strengthen countries response to the epidemic. CRIS is a user friendly information system that facilitates the systematic storage, analysis, retrieval and dissemination of information on a country's response to HIV and AIDS. It is a highly valuable system for the National AIDS Council, or the equivalent, housing information relating to indicators, projects, resources and research. The system has been developed in close collaboration with countries to make it a relevant analytic tool.

Many countries have been using or have had access to information systems prior to receiving CRIS. However, these systems have often been limited to simple excel or access databases or applications that are not country owned, run and controlled with limited possibilities for customization and capacity building.

In many countries data is stored in multiple systems. Often, these systems do not communicate with each other and data is re-collected and/or re-entered at multiple sites. The use of multiple systems has often made it difficult to compare the data between regions,

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<sup>1</sup> See UNAIDS Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for 2002-2003.

districts or sectors in a country. CRIS has been developed to address this problem by allowing for an easy flow ...of data between multiple installations and different applications.

### i. Integrated modules of CRIS

The CRIS includes three different yet integrated modules. These modules are the indicator database, the project resource tracking database and the research inventory database.

The indicator module allows users to manage indicators and indicator sets. Users may create their own indicator sets to monitor specific programs or activities. The software has also been preloaded with indicators sets, such as those related to the UNGASS Declaration of Commitment, so that countries do not have to enter these. The project resource tracking database has been developed to inventory and track resources associated with HIV- related projects while the research inventory module will facilitate the compilation of information on all HIV/AIDS related research being undertaken or planned in a country. The three modules are integrated and data from each can be combined in joined reports or pivot tables in order to improve the overall analysis of the response to HIV/AIDS<sup>2</sup>.

### ii. The Global Response Information Database

To complement CRIS at national level, UNAIDS will develop a Global Response Information Database (GRID) on the UNAIDS website, where UNGASS indicator information from the national CRIS can be collectively presented<sup>3</sup>. The hosting of this information will provide enhanced comparability of national responses. GRID will be constructed so that when data are updated at the national level in CRIS, these changes will be reflected on the global site on a regular basis.

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<sup>2</sup> Please consult the CRIS Userguide v. 2.1 for more information on the specific functionalities of these modules.

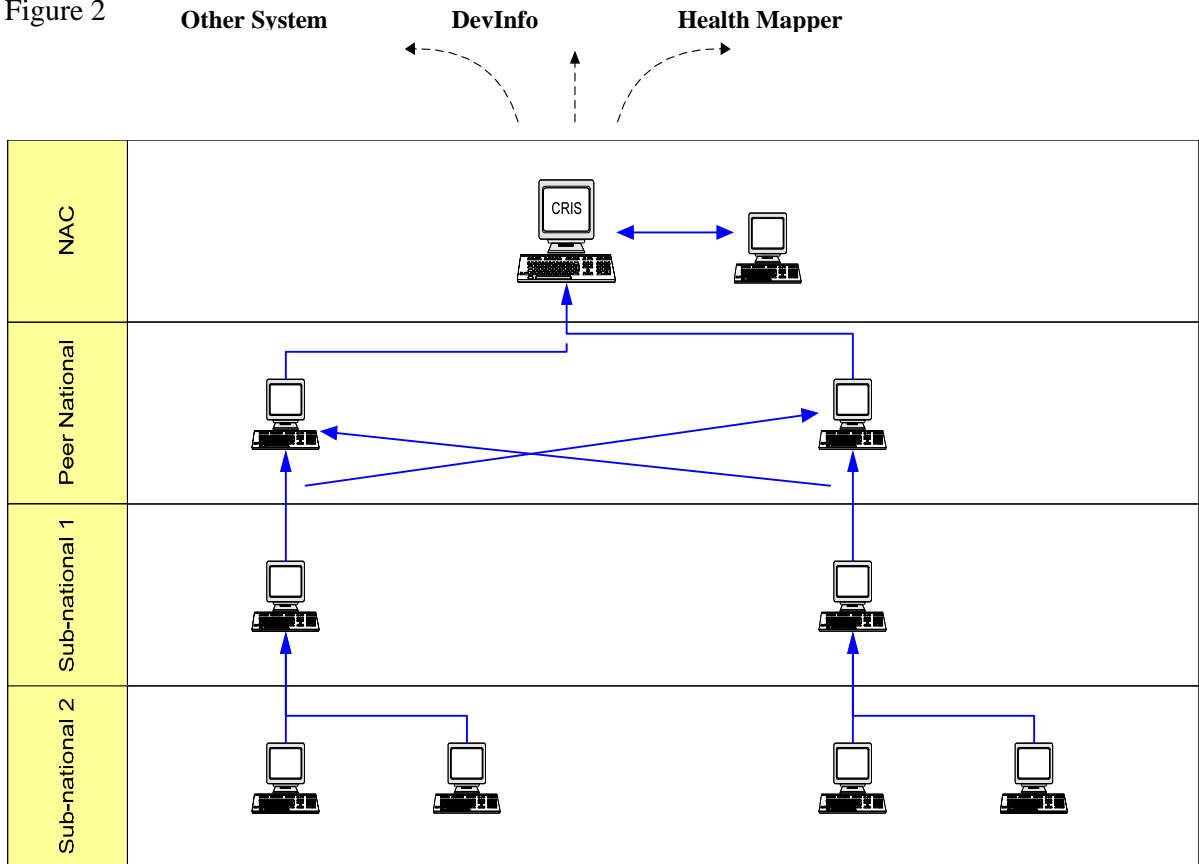
<sup>3</sup> Countries will retain the right not to share this information. Hosting of the information on GRID will be determined by national policies relating to sovereignty and privacy.

❖ **Integrating Information Systems**

i. Data repository

CRIS has been developed so that it may function as a central data repository or warehouse in countries, making data from various sources easily accessible (to inform\* (for improved) monitoring and evaluation. For example, the CRIS can be installed at the NAC, at the central level, while also installed at a local NGO at a central or district level and at the district governmental offices. These different installations (at different level of data flow) ensure that data is moved easily between the different locations, organisations or institutions that gather or house data and ultimately allowing the NAC, or the equivalent, to have improved access to the data in the country. Many data flow scenarios are possible and it is useful to identify the information flow in the country prior to installing the information system throughout the country. Figure 2 illustrates multiple CRIS installations and scenarios of data flow.

Figure 2



ii. Network of databases and applications

In April 2004 UNAIDS and USAID co-organised a meeting with bilateral and multilateral agencies to discuss the Three Ones principles. The outcome of this meeting was that the agencies adopted the Three ones principles which include:

- One agreed HIV/AIDS Action Framework that provides the basis for coordinating the work of all partners
- One National AIDS Coordinating Authority, with a broad based multi-sectoral mandate
- One agreed country level Monitoring and Evaluation System

The UNAIDS Evaluation department supports countries in their efforts to develop “One agreed country level Monitoring and Evaluation System”. UNAIDS works with partners to ensure that multi and bilateral agencies, NGOs, partners and local government collaborate on and work within one M&E system. Developing a network of computer applications and integrating databases is a key part of the “one agreed country level Monitoring and Evaluation system”. This can be done by exporting and importing data from CRIS installations and exchanging data with other applications used in the country. (see Figure 1).

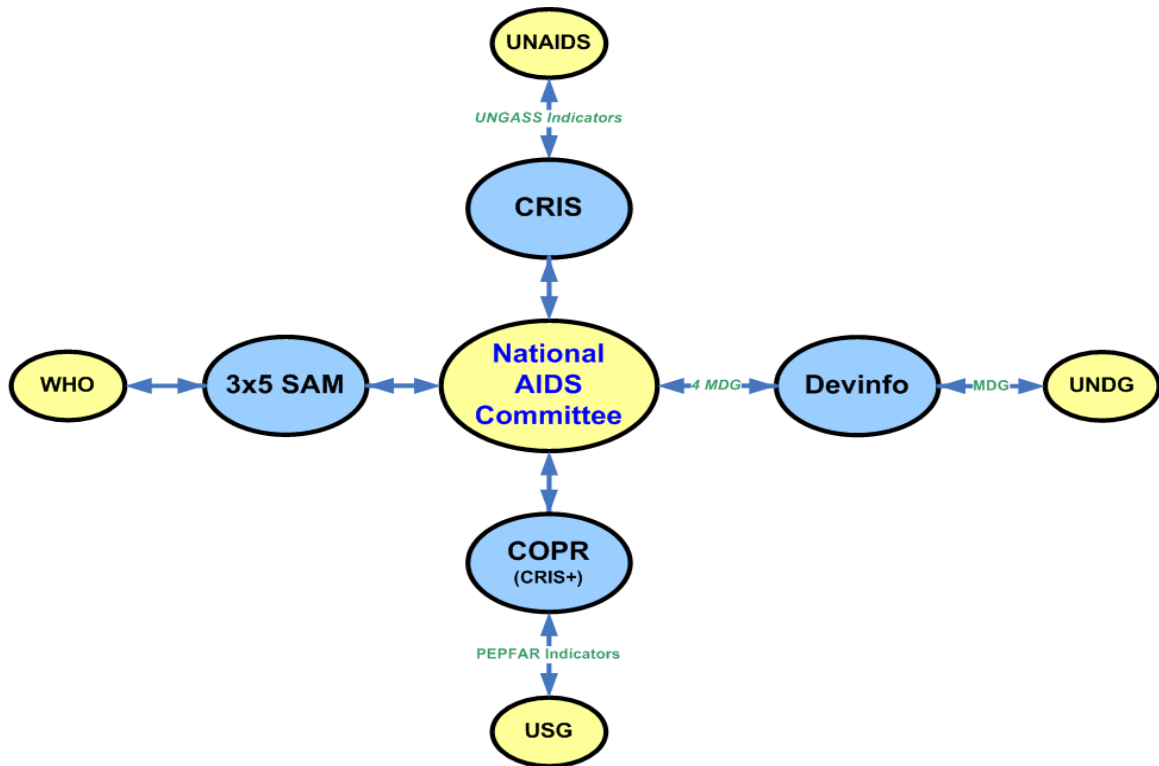


Figure 1 An example of data exchange <sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Figure 1 demonstrates how one system, integrating several applications, could be set up. It is recommended that IT staff is involved in the discussions of how to set up such a complete system. Involving IT staff, also in the decision making process, facilitates the task for countries to make appropriate technical decisions on how to proceed with developing a national health information system.

iii. Standard transmission format

The integration of information systems are made possible through the use of a standard transmission format using Extensible Markup Language (XML). This standard transmission format was developed in collaboration UNAIDS cosponsors and partners<sup>5</sup>. The integration of the standard transmission format into public sector information systems is an ongoing process and will increasingly enable systems to share information and avoid duplication.

Local systems can be integrated with CRIS using this format, however, it should be noted that systems integration with local systems is 'second generation' IT activity, requiring significant IT capacity. In the near term it may be prudent to defer this activity until the system is well-established. Documentation on the standard transmission format is available on the 'XML-Schemas' e-workspace. Please contact the CRIS unit at [cris@unaids.org](mailto:cris@unaids.org) if you want to become a member of this e-workspace.

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<sup>5</sup> The members of the XML working group are WHO, UNICEF, UNAIDS Secretariat, FAO, CDC, and ORC Macro.

## ❖ Guidelines – Basic Steps to Developing CRIS In-country

These guidelines have been developed to assist programme managers with the establishment of CRIS. Whereas specific implementation plans may differ according to specific country contexts there remains a need to focus on developing information technology (IT) investment plans, to map out information needs and to have a clear understanding of existing information systems and information flows in order to move towards system integrating. The guidelines seek to address these and other issues related to aligning CRIS implementation plans closely with monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plans.

The guidelines have been divided into three sections:

1. Integrating CRIS in the national M&E framework;
2. Installation of CRIS;
3. Creating reports

### 1. Integrating CRIS in the national M&E framework

There is often a lack of understanding of the role and centrality of information systems in strengthening M&E in countries. We therefore suggest, as a first step to implementing CRIS in your country, that you ensure that your partners and colleagues are properly informed of the role of information systems, the role of CRIS and the cost and benefit of harmonizing existing information systems to facilitate management of data. Below are outlined some suggestions on how to inform your collaborating partners and prepare for the implementation of a national information system. Please contact the CRIS unit at [cris@unaids.org](mailto:cris@unaids.org) if you have any questions.

- i. Provide initial and regular briefings to the UN theme group, the National & Provincial AIDS Commissions and the national M&E Working Group on the role of information systems in M&E.

Several software applications are available for countries to use, it is therefore important to emphasise the inter-relationship, inter-operability and the role of each software application. Standard M&E/CRIS presentations are available to facilitate this task simply contact the CRIS unit at [cris@unaids.org](mailto:cris@unaids.org) if you want access to these.

#### *Proposed Activities:*

- Pilot CRIS in a local district, institution or in a national office in order to test the use of it and to get a greater understanding of how it may respond to country needs. This activity may also provide a better understanding of what the gaps are in terms of the capacity in the country ahead of a full scale implementation of a national information system.
- Develop a national information systems plan. The piloting of CRIS may also generate useful information as a base for developing a national information systems plan.
- Provide regular briefings or updates regarding the status of the information system in your country. Briefings and updates can be distributed to national and local partnership forums, UN Theme Group and bilateral agencies on the proposed next steps for M&E and CRIS in your country.

iii. The implementation and integration of data systems may be easier if there is active collaboration with the major partners. Collaborative efforts may be facilitated through Technical Working groups. Some of the first steps to implement and integrate information systems may therefore be to set up a Technical working group, determine the Terms of Reference of the group and jointly develop a national plan of establishment.

Below are some suggestions for activities of a technical working group:

- Map out the existing information systems;
- Use the information systems in analysing and reporting on HIV/AIDS related data;
- Determine if existing information systems are effectively sharing (exchanging) data;
- Oversee the validation process of indicators to be added to the national programme indicator set.

iv. Review the national M&E strategy considering data collection and analytical capacity.

The NAC may also want to prepare a set of indicators for monitoring of the national plan or to monitor and evaluate other existing activities.

*Proposed activities*

- Identify indicators relevant to the national plan;
- Identify relevant data collection tools;
- Develop a detailed plan addressing local data needs;
- Organize capacity development activities for the people that are involved in data collection and analysis.

When developing national indicators one should keep in mind that each indicator requires extensive data collection. Collecting data for fewer indicators but of high quality may be more useful than an extensive listing of indicators of poor quality.

#### **Data collection for CRIS**

**Indicators** – this will require regular collection of data relating to the UNGASS and other national indicators. Data may be collected by secondary bodies or institutions and provided to the national AIDS council. Analysis and reporting on the collection data should be completed at least annually.

**Project and resource tracking** – focus on collecting detailed information from key partners to begin with. As collection procedures and analysis capabilities develop one can focus on collecting data from an increasing number of funding sources.

**Research inventory** – documenting research should be done in partnership with a local research institution. This should be an ongoing activity but initially focus should be on the major research institutions in the country.

v. Develop an IT investment plan

It is recommended that the national M&E strategy include the strengthening of information technology capabilities of NAC and key partners. This can be done by assessing the current information technology capabilities and develop an IT investment plan based on this assessment.

*Examples of what to include in your IT investment plan:*

- Map out all information systems, opportunities for collaboration and available resources. Identify what the needs and costs are in terms of hardware, software and IT personnel;
- Harmonisation of the identified information systems;
- Upgrade of information systems within the national response, where required;
- Identify costs and availability of local technical support for information systems.

vi. Develop an implementation plan for the national information system

*Examples of what to include in the national implementation plan;*

- A description of the role of the technical working group in integrating information systems in the overall M&E framework;
- A strategy for analysis of data and strengthening of strategic information;
- List of preparatory steps for UNGASS reporting;
- An IT investment plan;
- A detailed timeline for the implementation of CRIS in your country;
- A detailed budget for the implementation of CRIS in your country;
- Identified sources of funding for the implementation of CRIS in your country.

vii. Develop a work plan and budget based on the national M&E Strategy and the implementation of CRIS

*Proposed activities*

- Identify funding e.g. Global Fund M&E budget, UNAIDS PAF resources, World Bank MAP;
- The detailed/ budgeted M&E strategy should also outline any needs for training in order to build up local technical support capacity.

viii. Preparatory steps required to complete the UNGASS reporting expected in 2006

- Identification of data needs;
- Develop a plan for collection of data; outline the different roles of NAC, NGOs and stakeholders;
- Identify relevant data collection tools<sup>6</sup> ;
- Secure funding;
- Collect Data;
- Enter data into CRIS;
- Use CRIS to report the UNGASS indicators to UNAIDS .

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<sup>6</sup> Data collection may be through routine or special surveys or studies

## 2. Installation of CRIS at the national AIDS council or the equivalent

It is recommended that the CRIS is installed at the NAC or the equivalent and that this becomes the central repository for data in the country. We have listed some of the issues to consider for the installation of CRIS below:

- Be sure to check the system requirements of the software. Most installation problems are related to out-of-date operating system software,
- Network installations of CRIS are only recommended when adequate support has already been established. Acceptable business practice requires network and database support for data backup and access control.
- Installations at the national or sub-national levels are supported. These installations can be configured for National AIDS Councils (or the equivalent) or for organisations other than National AIDS Councils
- The CRIS has been designed to support multiple associations for place names, target population, organisation, and national strategic plan objective. For example, since project data does not necessarily represent just one sub national or administrative level it is possible to associate multiple locations with a project. Similarly, project data can be associated with multiple target populations.
- It is possible to enter data into the CRIS on behalf of other CRIS locations. For example, the National AIDS Council can enter data on behalf of regional or sub-national AIDS councils.

### *Proposed Activities*

- Strengthen the capacity of those who will be responsible for using CRIS in the country. The CRIS unit has trained consultants who are available for countries to use for their capacity building needs.
- Identify human resource needs – this may require the recruitment of personnel to manage the CRIS and ensure data entry.
- When installing CRIS, it is recommended to first install nationally (i.e. in the National AIDS Council) and then evolve toward more technically and administratively complex configurations as the capacity and data flow process mature.
- The human resources requirements will depend on the volume of data inputted into the CRIS along with the analysis and reporting being undertaken.

ii. System configuration

The primary installation of CRIS is important for establishing parameters that are shared among installations in a country. The following are among the items that need to be customized in the CRIS application administration to properly reflect the situation in a country:

- Official name of the organisation;
- Funding and implementing organisations;
- Target populations;
- National strategic plan objectives;
- Geographic place name, e.g. name of administrative level and placename (it may be necessary to correct the provided information);
- National programme indicators;
- Language, if necessary.

After installation, these items should be modified and a setup configuration file should be developed to share with the application CD. When subsequent installations are proposed, this file is read and populates the system with standard information.

iii. Data exchange and data integration

CRIS can easily support data exchange among the different installations. With an integrated standard transmission format CRIS allows for data and indicator definitions to be exchanged seamlessly between different systems.

Data is identified by organisation and place name to support this. Peer ministries, sub national entities and NGOs can all exchange data using CRIS. Data can also be exchanged with other major applications once they integrate the standard transmission format in their applications.

The exchange of data facilitates the breakdown of administrative, technical and organisational barriers to data exchange. It allows countries to leverage the strengths of different information systems and applications, bringing together several information systems to create “one” system in the country.

In addition to sub-national entry by administrative area, it is possible that different governmental entities are made responsible for different indicators or sets of indicators. It will therefore be important to determine the relationships with sources of data to streamline and rationalize the flow of information throughout the country. These relationships should be outlined in a national data collection strategy and through data management protocols. Sub-national locations corresponding to the sub-national administrative entities will need to be identified.

The data refresh process built into CRIS takes this a step /further by returning global or national data, once verified, back to standalone installations. UNAIDS will provide global data back to countries, containing new indicator definitions when needed.

### 3. Creating reports in CRIS

In order to develop strategic information for a strengthened national response to HIV and AIDS we recommend that the data entered into CRIS is regularly analysed and that planning and projects are informed by these analyses.

- *Proposed activities:*
- Establishment of timelines for the receipt of relevant data to be inputted into the CRIS;
- Establish national validation process for the data – countries may want to get the input from the national M&E working group in the validation process. It is especially important that data used for policy making and decision making is properly validated;
- Review of the analysis resulting from the CRIS data;
- Use of the data and analysis from the CRIS for the review of both the situational assessment and response analysis;
- Develop a strategic report or briefing paper utilizing the data from the CRIS (and other relevant data sources), on an annual or semi-annual basis.
- Production of regular updates for the national AIDS council or the equivalent

The CRIS unit is prototyping ways to substitute written reports with electronic reporting. It is expected that this will ease the reporting burden on CRIS users. For example, it may be possible to utilize CRIS for a substantial amount of information contained in the UNAIDS UCC Country Report.

Regular provision of UNGASS –HIV information to UNAIDS Geneva

*Proposed activities:*

- Using the export function within the CRIS, export the UNGASS – HIV information from the NAC to UNAIDS Geneva. A secondary validation process will occur at UNAIDS prior to posting of the information on the GRID
- Refresh of data from the GRID to CRIS. Using this import function, M&E Officers at country level are able to import data from the GRID. The refresh process provides national CRIS with global data e.g. the UNGASS indicator information from all countries who have reported to UNAIDS.
- Production of regular updates to the NAC or to the national institution responsible for following up on HIV and AIDS related issues

## ❖ Country Example - Piloting CRIS in Botswana<sup>7</sup>

Botswana has taken many steps to advance substantially in terms of preparing for, testing, planning and implementing an information system in order to support and strengthen their monitoring and evaluation system. Botswana has managed several pilots of CRIS as part of the strategy to identify and implement an appropriate information system. Below are outlined the various pilot projects undertaken in Botswana, using CRIS.

### CRIS and the National Response

The National AIDS Coordinating Agency (NACA), responsible for ensuring coordination of the National Response in Botswana, has developed an M&E unit called the Botswana HIV/AIDS Response Information Management System (BHRIMS). The BHRIMS unit is responsible for the coordination of all related monitoring and evaluation activities and have developed a National M&E Plan 2003 – 2007 as part of their harmonisation efforts, which monitors the National Strategic Framework.

To ensure the establishment and buy in of an electronic information system and to determine the most suitable application/ information system, the Technical Working Group (TWG) of BHRIMS brought together the major players working with HIV/AIDS information systems in Botswana and established an Informatics TWG (ITWG). The ITWG forum informs and advises the processes and policies relating to the harmonisation and integration of systems. The following briefly outlines the priorities that were agreed on:

- Development of an Informatics Needs Assessment
- Establishment of a Statement of User Requirements (SOUR),
  - Mapping of existing systems
  - Development of a Data Dictionary
  - Development of a Data Model
- Creation of a project plan
  - Development of a Prototype database
  - Piloting of the Beta version database
  - Development of a feedback mechanism with stakeholders
- Creation or selection of a database
- Execution and roll-out of the BHRIMS database

Although it appeared to the ITWG that CRIS (v2.1) could meet the majority of BHRIMS system requirements, it was necessary to assess CRIS along with other potential systems and keep the possibility open of developing a locally customised database. The process of assessing the various options available ensures that there is buy-in for whatever system is selected. Although this process is slow it is ultimately the best way of selecting a national information system, which will ultimately be the solidifying system to in line with the 'Third One'.

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<sup>7</sup> The CRIS unit of UNAIDS would like to thank Mr. Wayne Gill, the UNAIDS M&E officer in Botswana, for providing the information on this country example.

## **CRIS and the Ministry of Local Government**

Although it was not decided which system should be used in the BHRIMS unit, the Ministry of Local Government elected to begin the selection process by piloting CRIS as opposed to developing their own system. The Ministry of Local Government initiated a pilot in two districts. Since the local government is responsible for approximately 80% of programmatic data the pilot provided an excellent opportunity to test a full data stream from sub-national through to national level.

Through the pilots, the districts have seen significant advantages of CRIS in how it provides district level analysis and report generation. Previously, the districts tended to channel the information to the central level directly without first using the data for their own analysis. Piloting CRIS at the district levels brought about enthusiasm for district analysis and programme monitoring and is leading towards district empowerment and data integrity.

In Botswana the intention is to link the CRIS indicator data with DevInfo at the central level in order to develop additional reporting functions and specifically to enable geographical map generation. Through the mapping functionality, data can easily be presented to compare the districts and provide data layering analysis including population densities, areas covered by health clinics, household survey data and census data. The UNAIDS CRIS unit and the XML working group have been developing a data exchange mechanism to provide seamless data transfer from CRIS to DevInfo.

## **CRIS and the Implementation Support Plan**

One of the priorities of the Regional Coordinator, the Theme Group Chair and the UN Country Coordinator in Botswana was to enable a coordinated UN response related to the National Strategic Framework (NSF) and to monitor the efforts. The CRIS version 2.0 which included the newly created project resource tracking module was received in Botswana in October 2004. This appeared to be an ideal opportunity to test CRIS version 2.0 as both the indicator and project resource tracking modules would be utilised, while keeping it "in house" in order to appraise the product.

The UNTG was approached with the idea and gave it full support. Many challenges were faced in relation to naming conventions, direct linkages with the UNDAF/NSF and UNAIDS objectives, report generation and formatting according to UNAIDS standardisation, indicator creation/relationships by project, indicator and activities and networking CRIS to ensure the Heads Of Agencies (HOAs) access to reports and Agency Focal Points for ongoing data entry. Although many of these challenges faced were overcome throughout the data entry process by trial and error, report generation according to Implementation Support Plan (ISP) standards and UN Theme Group (UNTG) requirements continued to be problematic in CRIS version 2.0. The enhancements in CRIS version 2.1 solved these issues

The first ISP reports generated through CRIS were presented to the UNTG in January and February 2005. These reports identified (and outlined) progress related to coordination and activities. Although the HOAs were committed towards using CRIS to generate regular reports on joint activities the agency focal points were less enthusiastic due to the additional burden of data management. This issue was addressed during the launch and the first ISP training retreat where the HOAs were trained on how to access standardised reports and focal points trained in data management. As a result of the training, some focal points and programme managers realised new benefits of utilising CRIS for tracking individual programme effectiveness. In general, the training marked a turning point in the implementation of CRIS for the UN ISP and, as envisioned, CRIS will be instrumental in reporting on matters affecting the UN response towards the National efforts.

As a general rule it is difficult to implement a database, regardless of its supposed and anticipated functionalities, unless it is populated with current and relevant data. Therefore, it is necessary to provide data entry and management support as part of the implementation

strategy. The initial data entry support was provided by the Resident Coordinator and helped launching CRIS from an IT vision closer to a functioning applicable monitoring tool.

From the experiences of Botswana it is clear that there is great potential in harmonising efforts in order to develop regional ISP tracking and also Global ISP monitoring, that provide real-time reporting, which could be accessed by regional and international offices.

### **CRIS and the President Bush's Emergency Plan for Relief**

Botswana has also been the host of another CRIS initiative. This initiative is related to the programme monitoring of the President Bush's Emergency Plan for Relief (PEPFAR). UNAIDS and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) who have been collaborating to map their specific requirements to CRIS. The collaboration between the CRIS unit and the USG have been ongoing since November 2004 when a CRIS assessment team linked CDC and UNAIDS at the country level with the CRIS unit in Geneva and CDC, Atlanta.

Discussions were held through a series of weekly meetings from November 2004 to February 2005 and it was determined that CRIS had the basic functionalities required for PEPFAR country monitoring. However, in order for CRIS to be used at the country level a number of modifications were required. A technical document, detailing the modifications that were required, was developed as a result of this collaborative effort. In addition to this document, the testing of CRIS in Botswana allowed CDC Atlanta to develop a listing of the modification priorities in February 2005. The specific requirements set out by CDC Atlanta have been incorporated in a special PEPFAR prototype version of CRIS.

UNAIDS expects that this initiative will influence the way CRIS is used by other PEPFAR and non-PEPFAR countries, programme indicator use and enhanced resource tracking, in particular.

## ❖ Support for the Implementation of CRIS

The CRIS software has been designed to be user-friendly, allowing rapid installation and use. Once the software has been installed, the user will have access to support documents and frequently asked questions. Nevertheless, additional technical support may be necessary to ensure a successful implementation of CRIS.

When addressing the national information technology capacity needs a clear distinction should be drawn between the capacity development that is needed to use the CRIS tool versus capacity development for data collection and analysis efforts.

The system was designed to be absorbed into existing IT environments, being not only customizable but country-owned, including access to the source code of the application.. Countries are responsible for securing funding in developing capacity and ensuring support in the implementation and maintenance of CRIS. If desired, the country can assume responsibility for future maintenance and customization of the application, assuming IT capacity is adequate.

### *Proposed activities:*

- Review of the current information technology capabilities of the national CRIS host institution and the National AIDS Council (or equivalent – if not the host of the CRIS);
- Development of a strategy for the strengthening of the IT capabilities of the National AIDS Council or CRIS host institution, including the development of personnel;
- Identification of local technical support facility – possibly UN agency<sup>8</sup>.

The CRIS unit recommends that countries identify local IT expertise that can be drawn upon both while developing a national health information system and also to assist in piloting and supporting the use of the system.

The training strategy of the CRIS unit is shifting focus from large-scale training workshops to implementations, developing the capacity of individuals who will be the users and support staff for the system. The CRIS unit has conducted two Training of Trainers workshops where consultants from consultancy agencies in Asia, Europe, West Africa, Southern Africa and Latin America have been trained in CRIS. These consultants are available to countries to strengthen their capacity on CRIS.

Countries can also request local or regional UNAIDS staff to provide them with support or contact the CRIS unit at UNAIDS headquarters in Geneva for specific questions or request for guidelines or documentation. .

Finally, technical documents and updates are regularly posted on an interactive electronic workspace ([ews.unaids.org](http://ews.unaids.org)). Please send a request to the CRIS unit in order to receive user rights to the electronic workspace.

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<sup>8</sup> It is important that computer systems are well maintained and protected. This requires investment in terms of hardware, software e.g. regular updating of anti-virus software, and staff. It is proposed that this support be provided through a local arrangement either by a commercial contractor or another partner.

## 1. Different roles and responsibilities within UNAIDS for CRIS:

All UNAIDS Country Coordinators (UCCs) are kept abreast of CRIS and its development, many having participated in the CRIS training workshops. The UCCs and UNAIDS M&E officers are responsible for follow-up with regard to the establishment and use of CRIS in the country, establishment of CRIS in support of the 'Three Ones' being a Secretariat Key Result.

The Regional Support Teams (RST) also provides technical support to their regions through the facilitation of training workshops and assistance with specific technical requests. Several RSTs have also identified CRIS focal points that are available for technical support to countries.

It is important to understand the different roles of those providing support to CRIS so that the right people may be contacted for timely and appropriate technical support.

i. UNAIDS CRIS Unit – responsible for:

- Software development;
- Development of supporting documentation;
- Training curriculum development and oversight;
- Technical support triage;
- Management of the provision of technical support for prioritized countries.

ii. UNAIDS Geographical Divisions within CRD – responsible for:

- Identification of priority countries for technical support and training;
- Oversight of reporting from countries on the implementation of CRIS

iii. UNAIDS Regional Support Teams – responsible for:

- Coordination and provision of technical support and training.

iv. UNAIDS Country Offices (UCCs and M&E Officers) – responsible for:

- Support local resource mobilization for procurement of hardware, training, data collection and analysis;
- Ensuring that CRIS is established and functioning;
- Facilitation of capacity development in collaboration with RSTs and UNAIDS CRIS Unit.

## ❖ CRIS Checklist

In order to accelerate the establishment of CRIS, the following questions may prove useful in local discussions.

- 1 Does your country have a Working Group on Monitoring & Evaluation? What are the Terms of Reference (TORs) of the working group?
- 2 Who are the members of this working group? How does/could the working group on Monitoring and Evaluation best contribute to the implementation of CRIS?
- 3 What role is the UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS playing in the implementation of CRIS in your country?
- 4 What is needed to upgrade the information technology needs of the national AIDS council? (Including training of personnel, hiring of personnel, added equipment, collaboration with local technical support etc.)
- 5 How can the UN support appropriate data collection relating to CRIS?
- 6 What is/could be the role of bilateral organisations, e.g. USG PEPFAR? How can they best work together to support the implementation of CRIS in your country?
- 7 What is/could be the contribution of NGOs? How can they best work together to support the implementation of CRIS in your country?
- 8 Does your country have an IT investment plan?
- 9 Have you completed the following for a successful installation of CRIS in your country;
  - Identified correct geographic place names;
  - Identified target populations;
  - Modify other tables in the CRIS administration;
  - Identified the CRIS host institution and other relevant organizations utilized in CRIS;
  - Added the indicators that have been developed by the M&E working group in the CRIS;
  - Exported a configuration file to prepare for subsequent installations.
- 10 Who will be responsible for CRIS in your country? Is there a specific person identified to oversee the CRIS?
- 11 Do you already have confirmed sources of funding (budget) for the implementation of CRIS in your country?
- 12 Have data available to test data flow and communication with the CRIS Unit, e.g. HIV prevalence data entered and exported from CRIS?