

JOINT REVIEWS OF NATIONAL AIDS RESPONSES

A Guidance Paper



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JOINT UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME ON HIV/AIDS

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Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
NAA	National AIDS Authority
PEPFAR	US American President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNGASS	United Nations General Assembly Special Session (on HIV/AIDS)

1. Purpose of this Guidance Paper

What is a ‘Joint Review’? For the purpose of this Guidance Paper, the term Joint Review refers exclusively to the comprehensive, periodic, systematic assessment of the *overall* national response to the HIV epidemic carried out *jointly* with relevant stakeholders and partners and as an integral part of a national HIV strategic programming cycle. However, the Joint Review of the national response should clearly build on, and be informed by, reviews of specific HIV projects, specific sectoral responses, or reviews of discrete elements of the overall HIV response, all of which may also be expected to be carried out jointly with relevant partners and stakeholders.

What is this Guidance Paper about? This Paper sets out the rationale for Joint Reviews. It underlines the principles that should govern these reviews, outlines their scope and objectives, and the links to other HIV-related review processes. Specifically, it offers broad guidance for planning, implementing, and following up on joint reviews that can be adapted and tailored to different contexts.

It is therefore primarily about the issues in and the *process* of carrying out comprehensive joint reviews and ensuring that the findings are used to inform more effective and efficient programmes aligned with national processes and the priorities of countries towards universal access. It may also usefully serve as an advocacy tool for promoting joint reviews as standard activities within national strategic HIV programming cycles.

It complements, but *does not* substitute for, detailed technical guidance on reviews of discrete aspects and elements of a national response, be they treatment and prevention programmes, or management and operational issues.

Who is the Paper addressed to? The Guidance Paper can be used by any entities and individuals with responsibility for planning, managing, implementing and evaluating HIV-specific or HIV-related programmes and projects at national as well as district or community levels.

It is of particular relevance to:

- ➔ National AIDS Authorities or national coordinating entities;
- ➔ managers of HIV-related programmes from government as well as civil society or nongovernmental organizations;
- ➔ development partners, including the UN system and the Joint UN Team on HIV; as well as
- ➔ those responsible for broader development planning processes, including for National Development Plans and Poverty Reduction Strategies.

2. Rationale for Joint Reviews

A complex, dynamic and crowded environment of national responses to HIV, nested in a changing political, social, economic and biomedical environment. National responses now consist of a multiplicity and diversity of activities and inputs across a whole range of sectors. Importantly, they involve many more implementing and funding partners and actors than was the case a few years ago. The advances in treatment coupled with the significant increase in financial resources for HIV programmes of the last few years (through, among others, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria [Global Fund]; PEPFAR; and private-sector foundations) have added to the intensity and complexity of national responses. This is especially the case in those countries most heavily affected by the HIV pandemic. At the same time, the goal of universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support has instilled a renewed sense of urgency and purpose to national responses.

The need for aid effectiveness at country level: the vastly-improved financial environment has prompted reflections on the management of HIV-related aid (“making the money work”), and the capacity of governments to lead and coordinate the national response. These are congruent with global and national level reflections on, and commitments to, harmonization and alignment of aid delivery in general, strengthening governance and improving development performance.

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (March 2005)¹, and the report and recommendations of the Global Task Team on improving AIDS coordination among multi-lateral institutions and international donors (June 2005)² have thus reinforced the “Three Ones” principles subscribed to by development partners in April 2004³. Concurrently, the performance-based funding ethos of the Global Fund has placed renewed emphasis on demonstrable results and the need for robust national monitoring and evaluation systems.

The case for joint reviews: in the context of universal access the imperative for national authorities to gauge the effectiveness, efficiency, adequacy and continued relevance of the response is clear. However, the presence of so many more implementing and funding partners raises challenging questions.

- ➔ Are the diverse resources being utilized in such a way that there is increased and strengthened access to quality prevention, treatment, and care and support services for those who need them most?
- ➔ Is optimal use being made of the increased resources?
- ➔ Are the strategies technically and ethically sound?

1 The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness commits partner countries and development partners to increasing efforts in harmonization and alignment with national development strategies and institutional procedures, developed by partner countries in an inclusive fashion. http://www.oecd.org/document/18/0,3343,en_2649_15577209_35401554_1_1_1_1,00.html

2 The focus of the GTT is on how the multilateral system and international development partners can streamline, simplify and further harmonize procedures and practices to improve the effectiveness of country-led responses and reduce the burden placed on countries. http://data.unaids.org/Publications/IRC-pub06/JC1125-GlobalTaskTeamReport_en.pdf

3 the “Three Ones” principles, to achieve the most effective and efficient use of resources are :

- 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 multisectoral mandate.
- One agreed country-level Monitoring and Evaluation System. http://data.unaids.org/UNA-docs/Three-Ones_KeyPrinciples_en.pdf

- ➔ With so many partners, how can we make technical support more demand-driven and more coherent?
- ➔ Is there duplication of efforts by the different partners?
- ➔ Are there areas or issues that are not adequately covered?

A Joint Review addresses those questions. Specifically, as a process that genuinely engages all relevant stakeholders, it offers an opportunity to:

- ➔ consolidate national leadership, stewardship, ownership and coordination of the response;
- ➔ appraise together the adequacy and appropriateness of the current response;
- ➔ secure or strengthen commitment of partners to national priorities and needs as defined in a national strategic framework;
- ➔ enhance mutual accountability and transparency, enabling an objective assessment of the overall status of the response;
- ➔ in particular, assess performance and results to date and, therein, the relative contributions of different partners and stakeholders;
- ➔ secure and strengthen commitment of partners to harmonising procedures and aligning with national processes;
- ➔ in the process, minimise transaction costs for all concerned and ultimately eliminate or at least reduce the need for separate project reviews;
- ➔ mobilize support for the National Response through consolidating and/or enabling strategic partnerships.

The joint review process and, subsequently, the findings and their utilization will ensure the continued relevance of the national response and its adequacy, and contribute to more effective and efficient use of resources to meet countries' universal access targets.

3. Guidelines for Joint Reviews

3.1 Principles

The following principles should inform the preparation, implementation and follow-up of Joint Reviews of National Responses.

National Ownership Joint Reviews are a government-led national exercise and the process is to be initiated and driven by the designated national coordinating entity.

Relevance The Review Steering Committee should ensure that the design, scope, and any special focus areas for the review are relevant to the status and trends of the epidemic, and of the response.

Inclusiveness and Participation All relevant partners and stakeholders should be part of the whole process in order to institutionalize inclusiveness. Particular attention must be paid to securing genuine participation of people living with HIV and of key populations at higher risk.

Commitment to results by all participants Genuine involvement in the planning and implementation of the Review also implies that participants agree to follow up on the findings and recommendations. There should, accordingly, be clear follow-up mechanisms.

Impartiality The choice of the Review Team as well as the review methodologies should be such as to enhance objectivity and minimise biases and prejudices.

Evidence Informed The Review will be informed by data from national M&E frameworks, complemented by data from partners' programmes or projects, specific sector reviews and reviews of discrete elements of the response. It should also take into account and incorporate scientific and technical developments.

Enhancing national planning Reviews are a critical part of programming cycles, not an end. The timing should inform future HIV programming. In the medium term the timing should also coincide with national development planning and budgeting cycles. They should build on robust monitoring systems. Alternatively, they should stimulate the development of such systems.

Sensitivity to gender and human rights The Joint Review process provides an excellent opportunity to factor in the important, but often downplayed or otherwise neglected cross-cutting considerations of gender and human rights.

Learning experience A major consideration and benefit of the joint review process is that it enables participants to learn from each other's expertise and experience and contribute to building national capacity.

3.2 Timing and periodicity

The timing and frequency for joint reviews will be dependent upon specific country contexts. National Strategic Frameworks or Plans, often with a four- to five-year time frame, have broadly guided national responses and the efforts and contributions of development partners for the last decade or so in virtually all countries. Few countries, however, had translated these into annual or biennial budgeted workplans with indicators and

targets, against which progress and performance could be readily and objectively measured. These shortcomings are being addressed progressively. In the meantime, the alignment of all partners' efforts with clearly articulated National Strategic Plans and annual or biennial action plans—and Monitoring and Evaluation frameworks—remains a work-in-progress in many countries, with significant bilateral projects at different stages of implementation and maturity. These have specific review mechanisms and reporting deadlines that have to be met, and any Joint Review planning should take those into account. Ultimately, however, as a comprehensive Joint Review mechanism becomes well established, it should progressively override the need for parallel and/or asynchronous review processes that have heavy transaction costs for governments and development partners alike.

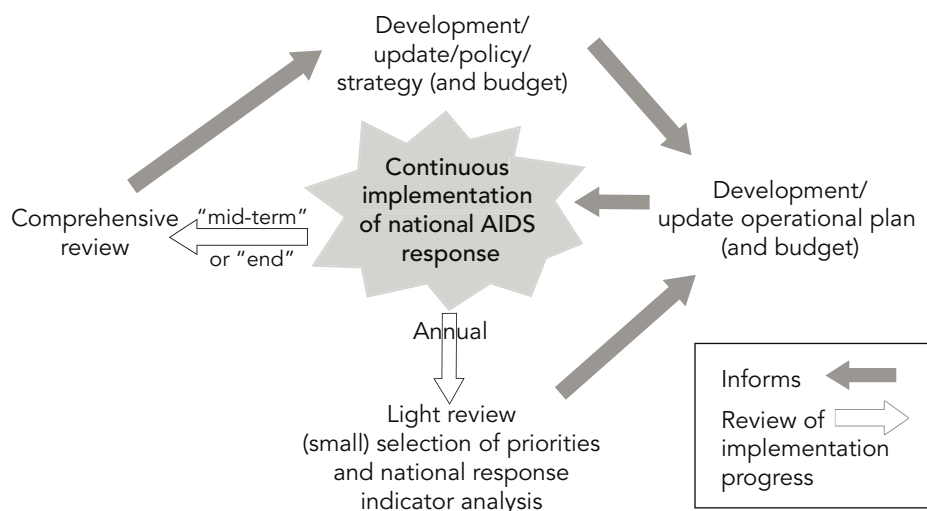
In any event, the timing of a joint review must be congruent with the national AIDS planning and budgeting cycle, so that the findings can inform reprogramming of ongoing efforts or planning for a new national strategy and programme. In addition congruence with national development planning, sectoral planning and budgeting cycles is important for the integration of HIV-related priorities into non-health sectors (education, agriculture, youth and women's affairs, defence, labour etc.) as well as mobilization of domestic and international resources.

Ultimately, too, the development of national HIV-specific plans—and therein comprehensive joint reviews—should be aligned with national development plans and budget cycles. By the same token, notwithstanding the rationale for comprehensive HIV programme reviews, HIV considerations should be mainstreamed into other relevant review processes, notably sector programme reviews.

As for the frequency of Joint Reviews, as annual or biennial budgeted workplans become the norm, a light annual Joint Review process should be envisaged, complemented by a more intensive and comprehensive mid-term review.

3.3. Scope and content

The scope of the Joint Review is comprehensive in that it examines all facets and aspects of the national response. Overall, it is meant to answer the following fundamental questions.



- ➔ Are current strategies responding to the main drivers of the HIV epidemic?
- ➔ Is the response relevant? Is it adequate? Are there major gaps? Are new issues emerging?
- ➔ To what extent are high-quality prevention, treatment, care and support services reaching those in need?

In the process, the joint review also answers the following questions.

- ➔ Are resources of all partners being directed towards nationally-defined priorities and needs?
- ➔ Are the collective resources, both human and financial, being used effectively and efficiently? In particular, is there duplication of effort? And are potential synergies and strategic partnerships being explored or exploited?

Answering those questions rests upon the generation and/or availability of good data, not least the following.

- ➔ Knowledge of the status and trends of the HIV epidemic.
- ➔ Information on coverage and quality of services.
- ➔ Knowledge of who is providing what services and where.

Comprehensive joint reviews, however, do not take place in an information vacuum. Most will be able to draw upon data from other review processes (*see Typology of Reviews*). In due course, specific project or major grant reviews should become redundant as they progressively merge with comprehensive joint reviews and are guided by the national Monitoring and Evaluation framework. Similarly, reviews with a specific technical or geographical focus, as well as the management and operational reviews would form an integral part of, and feed into, a comprehensive joint review of the national response to HIV.

In the meantime, the design of comprehensive joint reviews must take into account a reality where national responses are still often the sum of discrete projects with different time frames, and with established review and reporting mechanisms. The timing of other review processes and the information that they will have generated will, together with the status of the epidemic, inform particularly the *content* of a comprehensive joint review. They will determine any specific themes, technical and operational issues, sectors or geographical areas that the Joint Review—while appraising all elements of the national response—will pay particular attention to.

Key questions in that regard include the following.

- ➔ What data are available on different aspects or elements of the response? Any specific project reviews or evaluations? Specific issues-related assessments and reports? Sectoral reviews? Countries' universal access and UNGASS reports?
- ➔ Is information on the epidemic's status and trends up-to-date? Who are those most at risk of HIV infection?
- ➔ What are the aspects or elements of the response where there are perceived gaps or shortcomings? Treatment access? Coverage of prevention services in general? Prevention of mother-to-child transmission services? Drug use and HIV? Orphans and vulnerable children?

- ➔ Is the legal and policy environment supportive? Are there any major policy issues or gaps? Stigma and discrimination? Gender issues?
- ➔ Are there critical management issues? Are mechanisms for coordination at all levels (National AIDS Authority, partnership forums, Joint UN Team etc.) effective?
- ➔ What are the critical operational issues?

- ⇒ National policies
(AIDS + development + health +++)
- ⇒ National leadership
- ⇒ All stakeholders perspectives
- ⇒ Implementation info.
 - Public sector
 - Projects
 - Others
- ⇒ Gender and human rights
tense

If available

- ⇒ Relevant in depth studies
- ⇒ New global scientific info.
- ⇒ Other country experience
- ⇒ National development plan
- ⇒ national budget/sectoral reviews



Joint review process

Other benefits

- ➔ Informs other reviews (budget/sector)
- ➔ Basis for in depth studies to be done
- ➔ Share with other countries
- ➔ Joint learning

- ➔ Consensus on status of response
- ➔ Consensus on priority issues to address
- ➔ informs planning and implementation adjustments
- ➔ commits all participants
- ➔ informs partner reporting principles

A typology of reviews

The dynamics of national responses are such that they have generated over time discrete review processes and mechanisms.

Reviews with a technical area focus

Depending on the context and the status of the epidemic and the response, countries may carry out an in-depth review of discrete components of the response. These may or may not be synchronous with and part of the comprehensive review, and they require appropriate review teams with the relevant technical expertise. They include for example:

- ➔ treatment and care access;
- ➔ prevention of mother-to-child transmission programmes;
- ➔ injecting drug use and HIV; and
- ➔ key populations at higher risk of exposure to HIV.

Reviews of major projects, support programmes of bilateral and multilaterals

All actors go through an internal process of reviewing the implementation of its projects or programmes. Over time these reviews should be increasingly informed by and inform the joint review process. In that category, too, will be the UN Joint Programme of support that will be reviewed by the joint UN team annually.

In the meantime parallel processes are carried out for monitoring and reviewing the implementation of programmes funded by the Global Fund, the specific review and reporting requirements of major donor-funded bilateral programmes such as PEPFAR, as well as projects or initiatives funded by Foundations (e.g. Gates, Clinton and Soros). The information of these reviews should be used in the joint review analysis, while drawing the relevant partner into the joint process for future review needs.

Reviews with a geographical focus

In large countries in particular, the dynamics and determinants of the epidemic may vary considerably within the borders, and decentralization processes may be well established. In such cases, reviews that focus on specific provinces or states or districts may be relevant.

Sectoral reviews

National AIDS Authorities and development partners should advocate for HIV to be mainstreamed in sector reviews, particularly in heavily affected countries. In addition, some countries may carry out reviews of the response to and impact of HIV in specific sectors (e.g. health, education, agriculture, labour, defence).

Management and operational reviews

Given the large number of partners engaged in the national response, and the imperative for efficient use of resources, there is renewed attention on and scrutiny of institutional arrangements for programme management and of coordination and partnership mechanisms generally. By its very nature, a comprehensive joint review will pay attention to coordination and strategic partnerships issues. In some settings, however, there may have been recent in depth institutional and programme management reviews.

3.4 The Joint Review Process

The content (the ‘WHAT’) of joint reviews will therefore be dependent upon the context, unlike the joint review process (the ‘HOW’) which should be determined by, and in line with, the principles outlined.

The process can be divided into distinct phases, although they overlap.

- ➔ The *planning* phase, during which the scope of the Review is also defined, based on available information on the status of the epidemic and the response.
- ➔ The *data collection* phase, during which additional quantitative and qualitative data are gathered.
- ➔ The *synthesis and analysis* of findings and recommendations
- ➔ *Dissemination and follow-up*.

3.4.1 Planning

The following steps are recommended.

1. Set up a Steering Committee chaired by the designated National AIDS Authority and with representation from major stakeholders. Its task will be to oversee and guide the whole process from planning through implementation to follow-up. Consideration should be given to have a key stakeholder to co-chair the Committee with the National AIDS Authority.

The Steering Committee’s composition and its ways or working should underscore the principle of national leadership of the process and at the same time reinforce the principle of participation and inclusion. Participation of key stakeholders and partners in the planning ensures that they have a say in defining the scope and content of the review and strengthens commitment to its recommendations and follow-up.

2. Establish a Review Secretariat

A Secretariat will be established for the duration of the review process. Under the guidance of the Steering Committee, it will be responsible for drawing up the terms of reference (TOR), gathering all relevant available data and documentation, and generally supporting the implementation of the Review.

The Secretariat will consist mostly of staff of the national coordinating entity. Development partners (bilateral donors and the multilaterals) should in addition support the Secretariat with dedicated staff time throughout the process and civil society networks should be supported to also dedicate time to the Secretariat. This would signal their commitment to the joint review process.

UNAIDS Country Coordinators, M&E advisers, with the Joint UN teams on AIDS have a particularly critical role to play in supporting National AIDS Authorities in organizing and planning for the Review, advocating with development partners and others for their participation and contribution, as well as ensuring that the process is truly inclusive, not least of people living with HIV and key populations at higher risk.

3. Draw up Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Review.

Having clear Terms of Reference and agreement about them serve three main purposes.

- ➔ They articulate concretely and clearly the scope of the review, time frame, and methodologies.
- ➔ They build consensus around agreed objectives among all stakeholders and harness collective support for the review and, subsequently, its recommendations.
- ➔ They help to secure the inclusion and genuine participation of all partners.

Joint Reviews should be relevant and appropriate to the status of the epidemic and the response. A major initial task of the Steering Committee and the Secretariat is therefore to draw up Terms of Reference for a Joint Review on the basis of what is known about the epidemic and the response. Ultimately, the Joint Review should contribute to enhancing access to quality prevention, treatment, care and support services for those in need.

The Terms of Reference can be usefully captured and elaborated upon in a **Concept Note**. This would spell out in detail what will be reviewed, where, by whom, and what issues and programme areas will receive specific attention and why. The Concept Note would also spell out the time frame, the proposed methodologies, and outline required inputs and costs, as well as the strategies for follow-up, dissemination and implementation of the recommendations.

4. Circulate the Terms of Reference and/or the Concept Note among all partners for inputs.
5. Finalise Terms of Reference/Concept Note.
6. Mobilize resources—human and financial. Ideally all partners will contribute as appropriate.

Engaging key stakeholders and partners

The whole planning and preparation phase is a critical time for securing the engagement of key stakeholders and partners. Their respective motivations, and incentives for participation in a Joint Review on the one hand, and constraints and disincentives on the other, are likely to differ. They may relate to financial and human resource issues, questions of timing and duration, and to specific concerns over the scope and content. Civil society organizations for example may be sceptical about issues of transparency and accountability, and people living with HIV and special interest groups in particular may need reassurance about genuine as opposed to token participation. Donors—and everyone else for that matter—will need to be convinced that the Joint Review process will result in more effective and efficient use of resources.

Understanding the different motivations and concerns will enable the planning team to address them as required through the Review's process, scope and content, and methodologies, and advocate accordingly. In that context, the following questions may be asked of each.

- ➔ What has been/is their involvement to date in the response?
- ➔ What is their current or potential, unique or major contribution to that response?
- ➔ What are their concerns about the current status of the epidemic and the response?
What should the Joint Review pay particular attention to?
- ➔ What are their constraints to participating fully in a joint review process?
- ➔ What would induce or facilitate their participation?

7. Constitute the Review Team, and draw up Terms of Reference for the team members and issue contracts for external consultants. Establish Technical Working Groups as relevant. The composition of the team and profile of the team members will be determined by the agreed scope of the Review as well as by the availability of technical assistance, both national and international. A balance must be struck between external expertise from abroad, “external” in-country national expertise from academia, research institutes, civil society organizations, and “internal” expertise (i.e. those actually involved in implementing and supporting the response, be they government, nongovernmental organizations, development partners, etc.).

The composition and balance of the Team should be such as to ensure objectivity and independence.

Inclusiveness/genuine participation and objectivity/impartiality are central to a Joint Review.

In putting together the Review Team the organizers will ensure that people living with HIV and those most affected by the epidemic are included and have a genuine stake in the process and its outcomes. Likewise local level (district and community) inputs and participation in the process must be obtained, especially as many countries have embarked on a decentralization process. The team composition should also take into account and reflect gender and human rights considerations. Finally, the breadth of relevant expertise and the balance between external and internal reviewers should be such as to maximize objectivity and impartiality.

8. Draw up an implementation and follow-up plan for the Review, based on the Term of Reference or the Concept Note with time frame, individual or institutional responsibilities, and costs and logistics implications.
9. Plan logistics—field visits, workshops or meetings, transportation, etc.

3.4.2 Data collection

As elaborated earlier, there is likely to be in most settings a range of both qualitative and quantitative data on different aspects and elements of the response that will inform the Joint Review. A fair number of quantitative data will be generated by existing national Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems. The Review Secretariat will collate all available information for the Review Team members.

These may include:

- ➔ HIV surveillance and Behaviour Surveillance Survey reports;
- ➔ national HIV M&E reports;
- ➔ Health Sector or Education Sector reviews;
- ➔ Demographic and Health Surveys;
- ➔ antiretroviral treatment programme reports;
- ➔ prevention of mother-to-child transmission programme reviews;
- ➔ rapid assessment surveys of key populations at higher risk (incl. size estimates, biological and behavioural data);
- ➔ UNGASS country reports;
- ➔ UNAIDS annual country reports;
- ➔ National AIDS Spending Assessments (NASA);

- ➔ resource-needs estimates;
- ➔ assessments of the status of coordination and harmonization or of National Coordination and Leadership (based on the Country Harmonization and Alignment Tool for example);
- ➔ annual review of the Joint UN Team support plans;
- ➔ Global Fund grant implementation reports; and
- ➔ PEPFAR and other major bilateral project status reviews.

Additional data collection

The scope of the Review will determine to a large extent how the review is conducted.

The Review Team may regroup into sub-groups to focus on specific technical or programme areas.

The information gathering process will involve to varying degrees a mix of:

- ➔ technical briefings and updates by relevant Technical Working Groups;
- ➔ desk reviews and analysis of available information on the different aspects of the response;
- ➔ key informant interviews or focus group discussions, including in particular key populations at higher risk, for additional information and/or for triangulation and validation of assumptions;
- ➔ thematic or issues-specific workshops with stakeholders to further appraise status and progress or otherwise (e.g. on treatment access, key populations at higher risk, management or M&E);
- ➔ visits to local/decentralized levels to complement, validate local level reports or reviews;
- ➔ if required and possible, commissioned special surveys and studies; and
- ➔ special site visits to assess quality of specific interventions.

3.4.3 Analysis and synthesis of findings

The Steering Committee will define the approach and methodology that is most appropriate for the breadth and depth of the Review. The following steps may be considered as a participatory approach to the analysis and reporting process.

- ➔ A preliminary synthesis of findings and conclusions around each major area by the relevant Technical Working Group.
- ➔ A workshop to discuss the findings and conclusions of all the working groups and derive action points and recommendations.
- ➔ A draft overall synthesis based on the above by the Review Team.
- ➔ Circulation of the draft report to all participants of the Review for inputs and critiques.
- ➔ Finalization of Review Team Report.

The process of data collection and the subsequent analysis and synthesis of the findings are at the heart of the joint review process. They apply and illustrate several of the key principles governing Joint Reviews.

They are evidence-informed and capture new science; the whole process is about collating and generating qualitative and quantitative data needed to inform decisions on policies and programmes. At the same time, the process should be such as to allow new science and evidence from the operational level to inform the discussions.

They strengthen national monitoring systems; the data collection process pinpoints the strengths and weaknesses of existing national M&E systems and can usefully stimulate national and international partners alike to adhere to the "One agreed M&E system" principle and consolidate national monitoring systems.

They also enhance national planning processes; in the medium term, as the timing of Joint Reviews coincides with broader national development and budgeting cycles, data from the process will feed into the latter, and vice-versa.

They are a collective learning exercise; the genuine participatory nature of the Review coupled with the breadth of expertise and experience of the reviewers offer a real opportunity for mutual learning.

3.4.4 Dissemination of findings and recommendations and follow-up

Successful follow-up relies on robust planning of the Review with all partners and stakeholders. It is during that phase that commitment to, and ownership of, the Joint Review process and the Review recommendations can be generated.

Once the Review Team has finalized its report, the National AIDS Authority can build on that commitment and ensure that the findings and recommendations of the Joint Review are taken on board and applied as appropriate by partners.

The following steps are recommended.

- ➔ National AIDS Authority to disseminate the Review Team Report to all stakeholders and partners.
- ➔ National AIDS Authority to convene a meeting with representatives of all stakeholders and all major partners, where the Report is presented and debated. In particular ensure strong representation from the local and community levels.
- ➔ The Secretariat with the Steering Committee to incorporate any major comments and suggestions arising out of the dissemination workshop that they deem appropriate.
- ➔ National AIDS Authority to release the final Joint Review Report.
- ➔ Advocacy of special groups (legislative bodies or commissions) as necessary.
- ➔ National AIDS Authority to lead the process of incorporating and reflecting the Review recommendations in the National Strategic Framework and Action Plans.

Suggestions for ensuring that the Review recommendations are operationalized

- ➔ Ensure timely dissemination of the Review findings and recommendations.
- ➔ Ensure that they are shared at the operational level among all stakeholders.
- ➔ Consider preparing audience-specific summaries i.e. tailored to specific constituencies (political leadership, media, specific lobbies, etc.) so as to enhance understanding, acceptance and application of recommendations.
- ➔ Capture key action points in a user-friendly framework with time frame, main implementers and partners, indicative resource needs.
- ➔ Define indicators and set targets for implementation of the main recommendations.
- ➔ Integrate recommendations into annual or biennial operational plan.
- ➔ Where relevant and possible, feed into resource mobilization strategies and integrate recommendations into upcoming major grant proposal developments (Global Fund etc.)
- ➔ If required, translate new priorities and emerging issues into operational guidelines.

Box Kenya: The Art of Expanding Coverage of a Joint Review

Kenya has undertaken in 2007 the 6th consecutive Joint Review of its National Response. It is probably the country which has the longest experience in building step by step its capacity and methodology of assessing its response in a systematic and continuous way. Starting in 2002, the process has become more and more inclusive. Under the umbrella of the "Three Ones" principles, this process has expanded in 2007 to include all 71 districts and all nine regions involving multi-sectoral stakeholders and civil society organizations. Each district had its review meeting and the experiences of districts were synthesized at regional level. District and regional level participation was assured in the national review meeting. In 2007, the entire process from district reviews to the central level lasted for two and a half months culminating in a two-day national workshop. The Review findings and recommendations are immediately linked to reprogramming the results frameworks at different levels. The annual exercise is linked with the national programming and budget cycle.

Challenges remain in the capacity to re-programme and use new evidence-based scientific developments to face the dynamics of distinct epidemics in the country. Equally, the voices and participation of most vulnerable groups need to be strengthened.

Ref.: Office of the President-NACP, 2007, Report of the Joint HIV and AIDS Programme Review August 2007

4. Lessons learnt: some key challenges

The dynamics of the epidemic and the crowded and complex environment that make up the national response have posed, and will continue to pose significant challenges to joint reviews. The following are some lessons learnt and key challenges in planning for and conducting a comprehensive joint review:

- ➔ securing high-level commitment and support from government and partners alike;
 - ➔ ensuring effective representation of constituencies i.e. that representatives have capacity and mandate to articulate their constituencies' issues;
 - ➔ ensuring genuine participation (especially important for key populations at higher risk) through, among others, appropriate review processes and methodologies (inclusion is more than participation);
 - ➔ managing diverse interests and concerns;
 - ➔ striking a balance between comprehensiveness and realistic timelines and costs;
 - ➔ ensuring that district and community level responses are appraised;
 - ➔ ensuring timely dissemination of the findings and recommendations;
- and, not least,
- ➔ ensuring that the recommendations are applied.

Finally, notwithstanding the challenges, the Joint Review should be seen as an iterative process (**see box on Kenya**) that contributes to enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of national responses and, thereby, to moving countries closer to their universal access goals.

Annex: References

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The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) brings together ten UN agencies in a common effort to fight the epidemic: the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the World Bank.

UNAIDS, as a cosponsored programme, unites the responses to the epidemic of its ten cosponsoring organizations and supplements these efforts with special initiatives. Its purpose is to lead and assist an expansion of the international response to AIDS on all fronts. UNAIDS works with a broad range of partners – governmental and nongovernmental, business, scientific and lay – to share knowledge, skills and best practices across boundaries.



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