

# Frequently Asked Questions

## What is CHAT?

The **Country Harmonization and Alignment Tool (CHAT)** was designed to help answer the following questions:

- Do we have inclusive, participatory national responses to AIDS?
- Do we have effective coordination and funding partnerships for the national AIDS response?
- How can we improve our partnerships to strengthen the response to AIDS?

The main purpose of CHAT is to invite dialogue about the strengths and weaknesses of the national AIDS response, leading to positive action for change.



CHAT consists of a three-part process of mapping—or constructing a visual overview—of stakeholders in the national response, and then conducting structured interviews with national and international partners. These interviews involve at minimum a set of standard, core questions covering several areas of assessment, while a number of supplemental questions are proposed that can be added depending on the local context. The CHAT uses an action-oriented approach that each country can apply in its own way to support the strengthening of partnerships, strategic planning, joint review and change management processes for the national AIDS response.

## Why use CHAT?

CHAT provides information about the stakeholders and relationships that support the national AIDS response. These relationships, if they are working effectively, create the enabling conditions for delivering the results and objectives set out in the national AIDS strategic plan and other global targets such as the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. CHAT is a way of assessing the strengths and the areas for improvement in these relationships.

## When and how should CHAT be used?

Ideally all components of CHAT can be used on a regular basis (e.g. once every two years) as part of a joint national AIDS programme review process. Mapping, the National Partner Assessment, or International Partner Assessment can also be used as one-off, stand-alone processes to quickly diagnose the extent to which either national or international partners are harmonizing their support to the national AIDS response. However, maximum effectiveness will be achieved if all three components of CHAT are used together, and then integrated into regular country-led and country-owned review processes where there is a strong focus on continual performance improvement among all stakeholders.

## Who are CHAT respondents?

CHAT respondents are the national and international partners engaged in supporting the AIDS response. Via purposeful selection, partners are selected and surveyed using rapid, open-ended, qualitative techniques to understand their perspectives on the national AIDS response. It is assumed that in most cases the total number of respondents involved in CHAT will be relatively small (between 25 and 75).

Efforts must be made to also solicit responses from agencies and partner groups that are not yet fully participating. Strategies can then be found to include these “missing groups” in the national AIDS response.

## Who are **CHAT** users and decision makers?

The national AIDS coordinating authority (as the group representing the multiple stakeholders and sectors involved in the national AIDS response) is the main implementer and manager of CHAT, as well as the primary “owner” and user of any CHAT information. This information may be used by the national AIDS coordinating authority to further improve its own programming and management functions as well as to advocate increased levels of engagement, participation, harmonization and alignment by national and international partners.

## Who conducts the **CHAT** research?

CHAT is managed by a focal point who is designated by the national AIDS coordinating authority to take forward the CHAT on their behalf. Research consultant(s) with expertise in qualitative and participatory or action research can conduct the surveys with respondents and undertake the required analysis with input from the CHAT focal point and a multi-stakeholder advisory group.

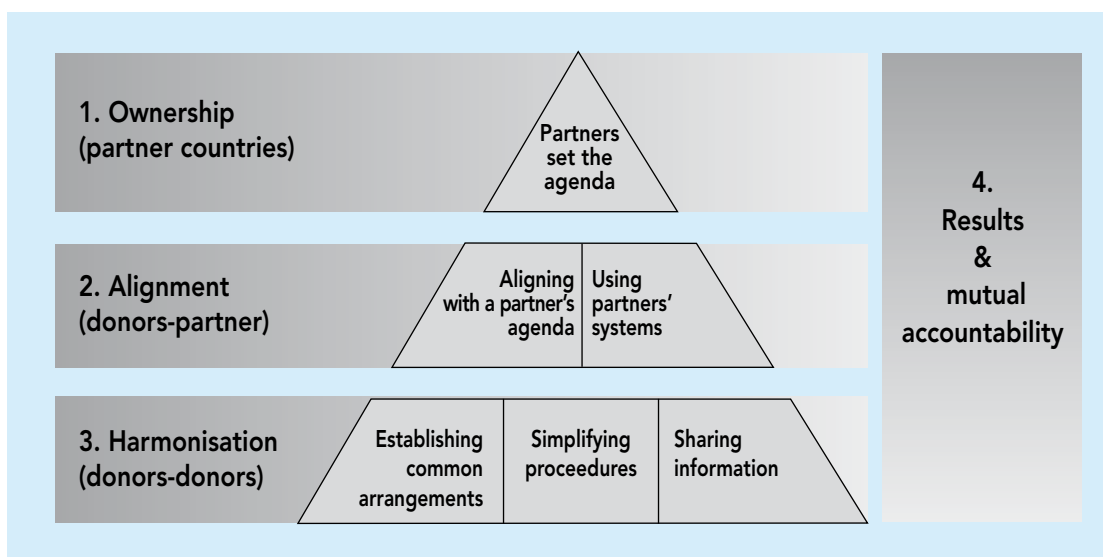
## What are the main products of **CHAT**?

At the country level, CHAT provides detailed qualitative information on participation, harmonization and alignment as well as on organizational processes and relationships, and the roles and functions of both national and international partners in the national AIDS response. At the global level, UNAIDS will use the country CHAT reports to distill international trends and gaps related to partner support for the international AIDS response.

## Can **CHAT** assess all aspects of the national AIDS response?

No, it cannot. CHAT provides detailed qualitative information on only two key dimensions of the national AIDS response: (1) national and (2) international partner participation, alignment and harmonization. A wide range of other tools that are available or under development can be used to assess overall national programme effectiveness, results, the strategic planning process or the organizational performance and internal capacities of partner organizations and/or the national AIDS coordinating authority itself. Furthermore, CHAT has not been developed as an internal organizational assessment tool for assessing the capacity or readiness of some national partners to be full participants in the national AIDS response.

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Aid Effectiveness Pyramid, OECD/DAC, 2005

## What are the origins of **CHAT**?

CHAT is based on a number of key principles related to the Aid Effectiveness agenda, as agreed in the Paris Declaration (March 2005), led by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC).

Building on the Paris Declaration, a multi-stakeholder Global Task Team on Improving AIDS Coordination among Multilateral Institutions and International Donors was established in 2005 to identify ways to strengthen national AIDS responses and national ownership.

The Global Task Team recognized that national AIDS coordinating authorities need support to strengthen partnership processes at country level and recommended the development of a tool to assess the degree of engagement, harmonization and alignment of national and international partners in the AIDS response.

## What are the areas of assessment for the **Country Harmonization and Alignment Tool**?

Categories	Areas for national partners	Areas for international partners
<b>National AIDS Coordinating Authority and National Strategic Framework</b>	1. Extent of participation and alignment by national partners in the national AIDS strategic framework	1. Extent of alignment between the AIDS strategies of international partners and national and/or subnational AIDS strategic frameworks
	2. Extent of representation for national partners in the national AIDS coordinating authority or equivalent body	2. Extent to which international partners are supporting and cooperating with the national AIDS coordinating authority
<b>Monitoring and Evaluation</b>	3. Extent to which national partners are using the national AIDS monitoring and evaluation framework and/or system	3. Extent to which international partners are aligned with the national AIDS monitoring and evaluation framework and/or system
	4. Extent of participation by national partners in the joint annual national programme review or equivalent process	4. Extent of participation by international partners in the joint annual national programme review or equivalent process
<b>Finances</b>	5. Extent to which domestic/ national partners receive a fair portion of the national AIDS budget	5. Extent to which international partners have indicative multi-year commitments (i.e. more than three years) for the national AIDS response
	6. Extent of integration by national partners in decision-making and reporting about allocation of financial resources	6. Extent to which international partners support pooled funding arrangements for the national AIDS response
<b>Administration, Support, Coordination and Communications</b>	7. Extent to which national partners participate in the design and assessment of the administrative systems for the national AIDS response	7. Extent to which international partners are harmonizing their AIDS procurement mechanisms
	8. Extent of openness and transparency among national partners and with the national AIDS coordinating authority	8. Extent to which international partners are building technical capacity and harmonizing their AIDS technical assistance strategies
		9. Extent to which international partners are harmonizing administration, technical/ financial reports and human resource approaches with each other and in relation to the national AIDS response
		10. Extent of transparent, timely and accurate communications among international organizations and with all members of the national AIDS coordinating authority

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