

Update on the activities of the CRIS unit

What is new:

- CRIS version 2.0 has been released with integrated Indicator (IND), Project Research Tracking (PRT) and Research Inventory (RID) modules and data exchange with Devinfo and Healthmapper
- A comprehensive CRIS user guide has been released
- Consultants from Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America have been trained in CRIS and are available to provide technical support to countries
- Funds will be provided to selected countries for developing case studies on establishing comprehensive research inventories
- Regional support in UNAIDS Intercountry Teams (ICT) and with private companies is being established

Global release of CRIS version 2.0

CRIS version 2.0 has recently been released to all the United Nations Country Coordinators (UCCs), ICT, UNAIDS focal points and UNAIDS cosponsors. The CRIS has also been made available on the UNAIDS FTP site from where it can be downloaded directly.

The version 2.0 of CRIS has been upgraded to include a Project Resource Tracking module and a Research Inventory module. These two modules have been fully integrated into the CRIS and allows for cross analysis using the data from all three modules as basis for reporting and pivot tables, which are automated within CRIS.

The Project Resource Tracking and the Research Inventory Database are the result of extensive field-testing. The feedback from the countries, which participated in the testing of the PRT and the RID, were integrated to ensure that the modules meet country needs.

Implementing CRIS – Initial steps

With the CRIS version 2.0 available, we expect that focal points begin by briefing the M&E community of the role of information systems, focusing particularly on the role of CRIS. Once briefing sessions have been completed, we suggest that countries proceed with developing a CRIS implementation plan and data collection plans. A key activity in this process would be to develop an overview of available data and enter this data into the CRIS. This will allow for countries to analyse data gaps and to begin utilising the CRIS. As part of the initial installation process, we ask that data be transferred to the CRIS unit, UNAIDS HQ.

The CRIS version 2.0 is available in English. Translation is in process and the CRIS and the CRIS user guide will shortly be available in all of the official UN languages. Full translation and feedback from version 2.0 will be incorporated in version 2.1 scheduled for release early next year.

Capacity building and technical support

The CRIS unit has participated in several training workshops to ensure the continued strengthening of skills in people who will be using the CRIS or overseeing the implementation of CRIS. The training workshops during which CRIS has been taught during the last few months are:

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| a. Atlanta, USA | 11-17 August (M&E/SI Officers) |
| b. Geneva | 25-27 August (CRIS Training of Trainers) |
| c. Zagreb, Croatia | 6-10 September (regional) |
| d. Durban, SA | 18-20 October (regional) |
| e. Dakar, Senegal | 18-20 October (regional) |

Training of trainers

In an effort to improve the technical support available to countries, the CRIS unit held a training of trainers' workshop in August 2004 where selected participants were trained for three days on the use of CRIS. The participants in the workshops were mainly consultants representing different regions in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. These consultants are now available to assist countries in building local capacity on the use of CRIS. If your country is interested in hiring one of these consultants to assist with national training workshops we ask that you contact the CRIS unit at cris@unaids.org. We will put you in contact with an available consultant in your region.

Informing the M&E community

As a part of our capacity building strategy the CRIS unit will be using an electronic workspace where we will post regular updates, key documents and where focal points can seek technical advice. If a focal point from your country is interested in joining this workspace please visit ews.unaids.org to subscribe to 'CRIS Support'.

The role of UNAIDS in providing technical support

Many countries will, in addition to the general support received from the CRIS unit and UNAIDS, benefit from additional technical assistance from one of the 16 M&E technical officers that have recently been recruited to strengthen M&E efforts in priority countries. These M&E officers will be trained in the use of CRIS during and will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of CRIS in their countries. ***The M&E officers, where present in countries or ICT, should be the first level of contact for the CRIS application and support.*** The CRIS unit will follow up with the M&E officers on a regular basis and will ensure that they are always kept updated on the latest developments.

Other UNAIDS staff will also provide countries with different levels of support. The different roles and responsibilities for supporting the implementation of CRIS have been listed below:

UNAIDS CRIS Unit – responsible for:

- Software development
- Development of supporting documentation

- Training curriculum development and oversight
- Technical support triage
- Manage the provision of technical support for prioritized countries

UNAIDS Geographical Divisions within CRD – responsible for:

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

UNAIDS Inter country Teams – responsible for:

- Provision of technical support and training

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

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

Country reports

As part of the implementation process, the CRIS unit recommend that countries maintain regular updates of the strengthening of national M&E systems and the implementation of CRIS in their countries. These should be shared with the CRIS unit so that appropriate assistance may be provided where necessary and to facilitate the overview of the implementation of CRIS globally.

Namibia

In July 2004, the CRIS unit received an update report from Namibia, which outlined some steps that had been taken to implement CRIS. Below are some of the key steps:

- *A CRIS briefing and training workshop was organised for the technical staff from a variety of ministries, the UN, NGOs at the initial start of the implementation.*
- *A monitoring and evaluation Committee was formed to oversee all M&E issues in Namibia including overseeing the tracking and reporting of UNGASS indicators. The M&E committee has been made up of all relevant partners involved in surveillance, population studies and in other research from both public and private sectors.*
- *The CRIS has been in the M&E unit of the National AIDS committee. This unit will be responsible for ensuring that the data collected in Namibia will be entered into the CRIS and later exported to the UNAIDS GRID.*

The RID case studies – lessons learnt

Funds will soon be sent to selected countries for data collection on the research being conducted on HIV and AIDS. With the data collected, and in collaboration with local research organisations, the countries will go ahead and establish comprehensive research inventories in CRIS.

The countries participating in developing RID cases studies will be documenting the process in detail so that any lessons learnt may later benefit other countries. These case studies will be available in March 2005 and are expected to contribute to strengthening the overall use of CRIS by providing countries with examples of how data, related to research, can interrelate with other available data for an improved analysis of the response to the HIV and AIDS epidemic.

A guideline document has been developed in preparation of these case studies and is available to those countries ready to proceed with developing a national research inventory on HIV and AIDS research.

Developing and sharing lessons learnt

In addition to funding case studies on the RID, the CRIS unit has begun the process of documenting general lessons learnt from countries that have advanced in implementing and in using CRIS. It is expected that the lessons learnt from several countries will be disseminated early next year and in this way provide countries with some added guidelines on how to proceed in implementing CRIS, in harmonising information systems and in exchanging data between information systems.

Next steps

The next steps of the CRIS unit for the next few months will include:

- Translation of CRIS version 2.0 into all of the official UN languages
- Translation of CRIS user guide
- Release of the CRIS operations Guide
- Documenting and disseminating lessons learnt
- Orientation training to be held for the M&E officers

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