



Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
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The 'Three Ones' key principles

The AIDS pandemic is a genuine global emergency that is taking the lives of thousand of people each day and threatening tens of millions more as HIV continues to spread around the world. Growing recognition of this threat has been accompanied by an increase in the flow of resources to low- and middle-income countries to prevent new infections, treat those already infected and mitigate the impact of AIDS. This increase in resources and a corresponding increase in the number of actors at country level often overwhelm national efforts to coordinate an inclusive and multisectoral response based on national priorities. The result is vertical and piecemeal actions against AIDS that are often duplicative and rarely sustainable.

Recognition of this problem led to a September 2003 meeting of AIDS officials from African nations, multilateral and bilateral agencies, NGOs and the private sector on the sidelines of the International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA). Consensus emerged around three principles applicable to all stakeholders in national-level AIDS responses:

- **One** agreed 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.

After ICASA, UNAIDS engaged with major donor partners to build greater awareness and adherence to these "Three Ones". On 25 April 2004, participants¹ at a high-level meeting in Washington, DC, affirmed the Three Ones principles and produced a commitment paper that laid out a series of steps for bilateral and multilateral agencies to follow as they apply the "Three Ones" principles at country level. The paper also tasks UNAIDS as a facilitator and mediator among stakeholders during the implementation of the "Three Ones", as well as a watchdog that will produce annual reports on progress toward and emerging challenges to concerted action on AIDS at country level.²

The myriad of epidemiological, political, economic and social situations in countries rules out the production of a standardized blueprint or prescription for adherence to the "Three Ones". Nonetheless, each of these three pillars is built by a set of principles for national authorities and their partners to follow. These principles are offered to countries as a basis for optimizing roles and relationships in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

¹ Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Côte d'Ivoire, Denmark, Finland, France, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malawi, Netherlands, Norway, South Africa, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, UNAIDS Secretariat, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Health Organization (WHO), World Bank, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Co-operation Directorate (OECD/DAC), International Council of AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO), Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (GNP+)

² The unabridged "Three Ones" principles and commitment papers are available on the UNAIDS website at: <http://www.unaids.org/en/about+unaids/what+is+unaids/unaids+at+country+level/the+three+ones.asp>

One agreed AIDS action framework

that forms the basis for coordinating the work of all partners

An agreed, common AIDS action framework is a basic element for coordination across partnerships and funding mechanisms, and for the effective functioning of a national AIDS coordinating authority. Such a framework requires:

- **Clear priorities** for resource allocation and accountability, making it possible to link priorities, resource flows and outcomes/results.
- **Regular joint reviews** and consultations on progress that include all partners.
- **Encouragement to civil society, the private sector and other nongovernmental partners** to take on larger roles in service delivery.
- **Commitment by external support agencies** to coordinate within the AIDS action framework in a way that is consistent with their own mandates.
- **Links with poverty-reduction and development frameworks**, as well as associated partnership arrangements.

One national AIDS coordinating authority

with a broad based multi-sector mandate

Convening all partners around one common action framework require a national coordinating authority. The legitimacy and effectiveness of such an authority is dependant on the following principles:

- **Legal status and a formal mandate** that reflects national ownership, broad and inclusive membership and clear lines of authority and accountability.
- **A clearly defined role** to coordinate the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the national AIDS action framework in an accountable and transparent manner. This includes coordinating requests for financing according to agreed national priorities, while leaving financial management and implementation to other entities.
- **Democratic oversight** by legislative authorities, including regular information sharing and reporting.
- **Commitment to an inclusive national AIDS response** that welcomes the full participation of civil society, religious groups, the private sector, people living with HIV and other non-governmental sectors, and recognizes the mandates and contributions of partnership and funding mechanisms.
- **Acceptance and respect by all stakeholders** for the national AIDS action framework and the leadership role of the national AIDS coordinating authority as the basis for cooperation that will enhance rather than constrain their efforts.
- **Establishment of a broad-based national partnership forum** that bridges the policy and umbrella functions of the national AIDS coordinating authority and the actual implementation of the AIDS action framework.

One agreed monitoring and evaluation framework

The absence of an operational common monitoring and evaluation framework in most countries has hampered efforts to maximize existing capacity for quality assurance, national oversight and informed policy adaptation. As a result, countries and their supporters may misjudge national priorities. Principles to forge stronger national monitoring and evaluation frameworks include:

- **Global-level alignment of monitoring and evaluation needs** around the indicators linked to the United Nations Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and additional core elements that emphasize performance and accountability.
- **Agreement among stakeholders for a core national monitoring and evaluation system** that provides high-quality data for analyzing country performance on the national AIDS action framework.
- **National and external investment** in building essential human capacity and infrastructure to meet national monitoring and evaluation needs.