

AIDS

Health Sector Response to HIV and AIDS

The Health Sector is key in developing National Responses to HIV. Though AIDS is not exclusively a health issue and comprehensive national responses to HIV need to be developed in a multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional way, involving all major sectors of society, the health sector continues to play a crucial role, for several reasons:

- (a) In most countries the early and strong response to the HIV epidemic was generated in the health sector resulting in an accumulation of knowledge and experience not easily found in other sectors;
- (b) With the advent of antiretroviral treatment (ART) for millions for persons living with HIV (PLWH) in developing countries, the health sector shoulders an increasing share of the national response by rolling-out and sustaining treatment of millions of persons who otherwise would die;
- (c) The health sector (like education or agriculture) in many settings in developing countries reaches the majority of the poor.



The **Health Sector Response to HIV and AIDS** has many facets and strategies and can be summarised under five main areas:

Treatment, Care and Support including antiretroviral (ARV) treatment and non-ARV care, treatment of opportunistic infections, collaboration with TB and reproductive health programmes, community and homebased care and support, nutritional aspects for PLWH, related laboratory, diagnostics and drug delivery systems.

HIV Prevention, including HIV testing and counselling, based on informed consent and confidentiality, control of sexually transmitted infections (STI), prevention of HIV transmission from mother to child (PMTCT) including primary prevention of HIV in women and promotion of family planning for women with HIV, positive prevention for PLWH, harm reduction for injecting drug users, e.g. needle exchange programmes and opiate substitution programmes, promotion of sexual health including safer sex and condom programs, prevention and clinical management of sexual violence, safe male circumcision, prevention of HIV transmission through blood transfusion, exposure to contaminated body fluids, instruments and sharps including post-exposure prophylaxis, research of new prevention technologies.

Impact Mitigation like HIV workplace programme for the health sector, community support programmes including care and support for most vulnerable children.

Contributions to an enabling environment for the national response to HIV, including promotion of appropriate national policies and regulations (Human Rights for PLWH, legislation against sexual violence, child protection, labour regulations etc.), fighting stigma, discrimination and denial, political advocacy and accountability.

Research including HIV and STI surveillance, biomedical, behavioural and social science research on issues related to programme and strategy delivery as well as the underlying causes of HIV vulnerability.

The implementation of a comprehensive Health Sector Response to HIV and AIDS poses enormous challenges to already weak health structures. Moreover the widely acknowledged “human resource crisis” is aggravated by the effect of the epidemic on all levels of health personnel.

Based on many years of experience in health system development, combining support at national (policy) and district (management) level, GTZ collaborates with Ministries of Health, civil society partners and the private sector in strengthening the health sector response as part of the overall national response to HIV and AIDS. Promoting synergies by linking HIV programmes with other health programmes for population groups (child and adolescent health, maternal, sexual and reproductive health, including family planning) helps to expand coverage and to enhance efficiency. GTZ in collaboration with WHO, UNAIDS and others also proposes public health approaches through new partnerships and innovative measures including development of adapted health and social insurance systems and cooperation across sectors to assist the health sector in contributing to the “Universal Access” agenda as agreed by the G8 and the UN system.

Our approaches and their results:

In **Tanzania**, GTZ has been advising the Ministry of Health on combating HIV for nearly 20 years. The GTZ supported **Mbeya Regional AIDS Programme** has shown that even advanced epidemics can be halted and reversed through comprehensive and sustained programmes using multisectoral approaches and combining prevention with treatment, care and support and mitigation interventions. Key elements were continuous capacity development of regional and local actors and scaling up services to reach the large majority of the population (see factsheet on the Mbeya example in this folder).

In **Cameroon**, the **German-Cameroonian Health and AIDS Programme** supports the Ministry of Health in the design and implementation of the National Health Strategy and a sector-wide approach (SWAp) to facilitate

and accelerate the attainment of the objectives for the health-care system. Support is being channelled into the establishment of local health insurance funds and into activities designed to raise awareness about HIV and prevent early-age pregnancies (for the latter see factsheet on “Gender-Sensitive HIV Prevention for Young People” in this folder).

In **Viet Nam**, GTZ supports the national programme on family planning and HIV control and contributes to institution-building among provincial AIDS control institutions. The multi-level support works systematically at village, district, regional and national levels to help partners translate the experiences gained at peripheral levels into the shaping of a national policy and programmes. In the provinces Cao Bang and Son La, reproductive and sexual health services and education, including HIV prevention, with a focus on adolescents and young adults have been initiated. Peer education programmes among persons with high risk behaviour are geared at reducing the spread of HIV and STI.

GTZ’s service package

Health system development: GTZ is providing technical advisory services to health ministries and institutions in order to improve quality, coverage and access to the health system and thus to promote its acceptance among the population focussing on equity, gender and human rights. Our consulting services support the integration of HIV-related services into existing health programmes and the application of a systemic quality improvement approach.

Capacity development and change management: For over thirty years, GTZ’s key tasks have included developing its partners’ potential and capacities, and facilitating the concomitant processes of learning and change, in order to achieve sustainable development goals. This is done by investing in people, organisations and institutions and policies within the framework of the national development strategy of the respective country. Special attention is given to decentralised and community approaches as well as to partnerships with government and civil society including networks of PLWH.

Technical advisory services in all related areas and strategies: GTZ has acquired technical competence and experience in all major HIV and AIDS related areas from prevention, treatment and care to impact mitigation and research. Special focus is on quality assurance, comprehensiveness, integration and sustainability of programmes and approaches.

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