

UN Learning Strategy

Info Note

on HIV/AIDS



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United Nations Learning Strategy on HIV/AIDS

Building competence of the UN and its staff to respond to HIV/AIDS

Did you know that almost 20% of United Nations staff members say they do not know how to prevent HIV transmission? And more than 50% report that they do not know how to use a female condom? The UN has now decided that it is time to address such gaps, finding ways to increase HIV/AIDS knowledge, both among professional colleagues working on programmes, and for all staff in addressing HIV/AIDS in their own lives. **A comprehensive learning strategy on HIV/AIDS has now been agreed for the UN**, designed to: 1) enable our professional staff to provide the best possible support to national HIV/AIDS responses; and 2) ensure that all UN staff can make informed decisions to protect themselves from HIV and that they fully understand the UN's HIV/AIDS workplace policies and how they are implemented. If staff members are infected or affected by HIV, the strategy ensures that they know where to turn for the best possible care and treatment.

The strategy is based on extensive consultations throughout the UN system, including a review of existing studies and a major survey on HIV/AIDS in the UN workplace, involving over 8000 UN staff members worldwide. It supports learning approaches that will make the UN more knowledgeable and competent in its work, both with partners and with our own staff, to: help prevent and control the spread of HIV; ensure effective care, support and treatment for those infected or affected by HIV/AIDS; eliminate stigma and discrimination against those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS; and mitigate the impact of the epidemic.

The strategy is broken down into the following four categories of learning:

1) Basic HIV/AIDS competence of all staff, covering essential HIV/AIDS information, UN policies and services, building a supportive working environment, and the

realities and risks of HIV/AIDS. To cover these learning needs, the UN has agreed that all staff, from heads of offices to junior staff members, must participate in a facilitated orientation session using the UN booklet on HIV/AIDS for UN employees and their families. They must also participate in a demonstration on the use of male and female condoms, be aware of locally available services (including voluntary confidential counselling and testing), and participate in a learning activity to raise sensitivity towards people living with HIV and to enhance awareness of everyone's vulnerability with regard to HIV.

2) Broad HIV/AIDS knowledge and competence of all professional programme/project staff, which includes a 'minimum AIDS-competence package' made up of the UN's Declaration of Commitment on

HIV/AIDS, UN Millennium Development Goals, UN corporate HIV/AIDS strategy, a broad overview of the epidemic in the world, respective countries' national HIV/AIDS strategy and structures, and how to integrate or mainstream HIV/AIDS into all programmes and projects. It has been agreed that programme/project staff must not only read the related documents, but also participate in organized briefings and discussions on these commitments and how to implement them. Biannual participation in related HIV/AIDS learning is required for these staff members.

3) Particular learning needs of the UN's HIV/AIDS Theme Groups

and heads of UN agencies at country level, including leadership and advocacy for effective action on the epidemic; strategic information required to guide the efforts of partners; tracking, monitoring and evaluation of the epidemic and actions responding to it; civil society engagement and partnership development; and financial, technical and political resource mobilization. These staff members are expected to annually participate in a learning activity relating to these areas as well as participating in a learning activity to raise their sensitivity as managers of HIV/AIDS initiatives in the UN workplace.

4) Specialist competence of the UN's HIV/AIDS Technical Working Groups and Professional Officers,

including joint programming for HIV/AIDS among the various UN agencies at country level, programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation and technical areas related to HIV/AIDS. These staff members must have an annual learning plan of

at least five days to enhance their HIV/AIDS competence and be active members of a technical network.

To complement the minimums noted above, additional desirable standards have been established for each of the categories in the strategy's implementation.

To make sure the standards are met, the strategy describes a wide variety of learning approaches, which are best used in combination. In the UN workplace, this includes ensuring that staff members have access to written materials (such as the booklet on HIV/AIDS for UN employees and their families), to voluntary confidential counselling and testing, to organized HIV/AIDS orientation sessions, and to a variety of other learning possibilities, including opportunities to learn from people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS.

Approaches for supporting national HIV/AIDS responses may include learning through: communities of practice and networks set up at country level; intercountry, regional and inter-regional activities; workshops; distance-learning programmes; exchanges with other UN agencies; and learning from peers.

Given the wide range of country situations, each country is expected to develop a UN interagency learning plan specific to the local context and then implement, monitor and report on the plan.

Implementation of the strategy is already under way, with plans to hold country-level facilitators' training workshops in 2003 and 2004. Country-level implementation guides are being developed and materials are being identified and revised.

For more information and to learn what plans are being made in your duty station, speak to your agency's HIV/AIDS focal point, your human resources officer or the UNAIDS Country Coordinator.