



Economic Commission
for Africa

SECURING OUR FUTURE

The Report of the Commission on HIV/AIDS and Governance in Africa

P.O. Box 3001, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Tel: + 251 1 51 72 00 Fax: + 251 1 51 44 16 securingourfuture@uneca.org



Key messages and recommendations

This report is intended for many audiences: decision makers in Africa, civil society leaders, nongovernmental organizations, business leaders, people living with HIV and AIDS, donor governments, and organizations and key leaders in the international community, including the United Nations. From the findings, recommendations and action plan contained in this report, we have distilled eight key messages followed by appropriate recommendations:

Key Message 1: There are multiple AIDS epidemics in Africa

There are multiple African AIDS epidemics with varied levels of adult prevalence and internal conditions for each country. This implies that no one specific solution can address the issues that fuel the course of the epidemics in a given setting. While broad patterns in the AIDS pandemic are discernible, the particular social, economic and political structures within localities need to be carefully understood to achieve effective prevention and mitigation programmes.

Recommendations:

- Encourage use of the best available data to know and understand the particular epidemic in varied settings.
- Design national response based on the country-specific knowledge of the epidemic.

Key Message 2: The epidemics in Africa reflect a strong gender disparity

There is a strong relationship between gender inequality, the subordination of women and girls in society, and extreme vulnerability of women to HIV infections and consequences of AIDS. Communities, supported by appropriate government legislation, should therefore address issues related to the low status of women and girls, violation of their human rights and the transmission of HIV.

Recommendations:

- Some cultural norms, behaviors and traditions increase the risk of infection and need to be better understood and changed.
- Understand and articulate gender in terms of power relations between men and women; identify the strengths in African cultures that are important in HIV/AIDS prevention and care and; change harmful social and cultural practices.

- Enforce laws to eliminate violence against women and girls.
- Provide earmarked funds that will assist governments in revising legislation to ensure the protection of the rights of women and children.

Key Message 3: The growing number of children infected and affected by HIV presents a challenge.

The number of children infected and affected by AIDS will increase in the coming years. Recent estimates indicate that there will be 50 million orphans in Africa by 2010, 37% of whom will be AIDS orphans. The increased number of AIDS orphans may add to the stigma, and require special needs, which if not met, will be catastrophic for the children and for Africa's development.

Recommendations:

- Support Institutions in providing adequate medical care to orphans.
- Strengthen and facilitate community support for orphans and families as a means of ensuring their integration into mainstream society.

Key Message 4: Prevention must remain priority

While recognizing positive trends in treatment, a sense of urgency must be brought to HIV prevention, to re-emphasize it as a priority for leaders, donors and grassroots workers. More than two decades of experience have shown that effective HIV prevention requires a combination of tools that address the various routes of infection and enable those at risk to make use of them.

Recommendations:

- Sustain prevention targeted messages about HIV transmission and stigma including health care settings and vulnerable populations.
- Provide access to HIV testing and counseling, treatment of sexually transmitted diseases and prevention of mother to child transmission services.
- Distribute technical means of prevention such as male and female condoms.
- Integrate treatment with prevention strategies.

Key Message 5: Inadequate human resources constrains treatment and care

The key challenge in effectively scaling up HIV treatment and strengthening African health care systems is the lack of human and financial resources. Understaffed and underfinanced health care systems whether as a result of brain drain or sick staff, cannot provide the incentives for skilled health care professionals to remain in public health care structures. This creates a vicious circle of increased work load deteriorated working conditions for those who remain.

Recommendations:

- Provide better conditions of service to motivate health care workers to perform and stay longer in their varied capacities.

- Re-think through existing forms and models of health service delivery, not in the context of antiretroviral therapy provision, but also in the content of declining human resources capacity within the health sector in general.
- Build the capacity of existing health care workers.
- Prioritize the treatment of infected health care workers.
- Adopt task shifting as a temporary response to human resource constraints.

Key Message 6: AIDS financing needs to be coordinated, predictable, long term and transparent

Scaling up the HIV/AIDS response requires additional funding to finance recurrent costs (personnel) and local goods and services. In addition we endorse efforts to improve the delivery of aid by harmonizing donor practices and aligning assistance with the development priorities of governments in order to reduce transaction costs articulated in Rome and more recently in the Paris Declaration on development effectiveness.

Recommendations:

- African governments should improve their public expenditure management to meet minimum performance standards including, fiduciary standards.
- Align donor assistance with national policies and priorities so that funding supports country-owned AIDS strategies that are fully integrated within the national development strategies.
- Analyze the need for integrating a comprehensive financing strategy into multisectoral plans.
- Improve budgetary systems and account to national constituencies in order to increase donor confidence that aid will be effectively used and accounted for.

Key Message 7: Leadership at all levels needs to be reinvigorated and sustained as part of a coordinated response

Recommendations:

- Commit national resources to the response and link the response to the broader development planning effort.
- Institute an enabling environment where citizens at all levels understand their role in the national response to HIV and AIDS and actively play the role.
- Implement regional and international commitments such as the Abuja Declaration and other related HIV and AIDS by translating them into national plans of action.

Key Message 8: The ultimate goal of good governance should be the creation of an enabling environment in which every citizen becomes part of the national AIDS response and the state is able to maintain efficient public institutions.

The long term goals of reversing the spread of HIV and providing care and support to millions of people infected and affected by the epidemic cannot be achieved without stronger public sector performance and a responsive governance regime.

Recommendations:

- Institute policies which put appropriate stakeholders, including persons infected and affected by AIDS at the centre of national response.

- Provide social protection mechanisms such as disability and chronic illness grants and emergency relief assistance as essential mechanisms of poverty alleviation.
- Create more fiscal space for African countries to ensure effective and timely absorption of grants.
- Africa's electoral commissions should encourage research as a basis for future work in their response to the challenges of HIV and AIDS.