

Treatment Acceleration Program

4th Regional Advisory Panel Meeting

Opening Remarks by Mats Karlsson

Welcome to all participants from Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Mozambique, WHO, UNECA and the World Bank, and a special welcome to the specialist guests who will share their insights into drug resistance, tuberculosis and insurance systems related to HIV/AIDS.

This occasion marks the 4th regional meeting in the context of the TAP project and this time you will deliberate on both technical and managerial issues that are directly related to the sustainability of anti-retroviral treatment. So let me share a few thoughts on the issue of sustainability.

First, sustainability is a term often used and thought of as self-sufficiency of the responsible agency to finance and implement programs. From the Bank's point of view, taking into account the long-term needs of all countries involved we should revise this and think about sustainable financing of programs along the lines of a reasonable contribution of the responsible agency to implement the program. In other words, we recognize the long-term support needs that our partner countries will require.

Secondly, sustainability is often thought of in financial terms. Although that remains a relevant issue, I would argue that maybe more urgent issues to address evolve around success and efficiency. It probably is obvious that unsuccessful or inefficient programs are likely to encounter less enthusiastic support to continue financing such programs.

For the sustainability of project activities the same applies. I'm therefore glad to hear that you'll be discussing the measure of success, or Project Development Objective as we call it. I would urge you to take this topic very seriously because it is not just an administrative issue; it is the fundamental yardstick against which this program will be judged to be a success or a failure.

It is well recognized that the sustainability of anti-retroviral treatment programs falls or stands with a concurrent decrease in the number of new infections – prevention in other words. This means that the two can not be separated and I would urge you to have a very intensive look at this issue, as people who may be primarily involved in treatment. For the sake of the sustainability of your treatment programs we cannot completely delegate the responsibility for prevention to others. The question how treatment can strengthen prevention is, here in Ghana is a matter that requires the National AIDS Control Program and the Ghana AIDS Commission to collaborate and make sure the treatment program remains sustainable and affordable.

I also recognize that the issue of efficiency is not an easy topic to deal with in an area that changes as regularly as the anti-retroviral treatment program does. We are all learners in this area and it remains important to recognize this, there is no established wisdom here and the Bank is delighted to support this program with the specific connotation that this is a learning experience. I wish you all the success in pursuing this learning agenda, in terms of successes and failures but also in terms of efficiency.

With these few remarks I hope you'll have very successful deliberations and I'll be looking forward to the final report. Thank you.