

aidsfocus.ch

Swiss platform
HIV/AIDS and
international cooperation

Annual report 2010/2011

One of the targets of Millennium Development Goal 6 (MDG 6), namely to halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015, is unlikely to be attained, despite some success. On the one hand there is the good news that the number of people newly infected with the HI virus declined by almost 25% between 2001 and 2009, and that about 6.6 million people in developing and emerging countries are undergoing anti-retroviral therapy, which represents an almost 22-fold increase over 2001. On the other hand there is the fact that the number of HIV-positive people continues to increase, as people infected with the virus live longer, thanks to antiretroviral therapy. 34 million people were living with HIV and AIDS at the end of 2010, and almost 30 million people have died from AIDS related causes in the last 30 years (UNAIDS 2011).

An analysis of the context of future international health challenges¹, commissioned by the Medicus Mundi Switzerland network, has ascertained that the Millennium Development Goals will continue to point the way forward in the coming years. Universal access to comprehensive HIV prevention, treatment and care programmes continues to represent a massive challenge, particularly access to second-line antiretroviral treatment, the enormous extent of the epidemic and the growing financing crisis. The contextual analysis additionally established that international health policy will probably no longer focus on individual illnesses after 2015, but will rather employ a comprehensive approach, which will aim to strengthen health systems and which will also cover the social, economic and political determinants of health.



Review of the year

23 July 2010, Vienna: Launch of the draft alternative report "**Engagement gegen Aids. Versprechen sind nicht genug.**" on Germany, Switzerland and Austria's international commitment on HIV/AIDS, at the World AIDS Conference in Vienna.

29 July 2010, Berne: **aidsfocus.ch Meeting Point.** "Benefits, challenges and limitation of counselling", with Jabu Mthethwa, Swaziland Red Cross.

9 September 2010, Berne: **aidsfocus.ch Meeting Point.** "Good food – good health. The relevance of nutrition for people living with HIV and AIDS", with Farai Mahaso, Batanai (Zimbabwe), one of FEPA's partners.

26 October 2010, Berne: **aidsfocus.ch's Annual Meeting**, with a sharing of views and discussions of Switzerland's international financial commitments relating to HIV and health.

29 October 2010, Basel: Lesson on memory work in the general tropical course of the Swiss TPH.

1st December 2010, World AIDS Day, Berne: Input on solution-focused memory work, and participation in a round table on current challenges, organised by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

7th April 2011, Berne: **aidsfocus.ch Conference** "HIV, sexuality and youth: Linking HIV and sexual and reproductive health and rights".

A reader on the conference was published in September 2011, as Medicus Mundi Switzerland Bulletin No. 121.



HIV and AIDS are increasingly threatening to vanish from the development politics agenda. A degree of "AIDS fatigue" would appear to be spreading. The international financial means for HIV declined by 10% from 2009 to 2010, that is to say from USD 7.6 to 6.9 billion. Further reductions are threatening to undermine the progress made.

This makes it all the more important that aidsfocus.ch and its partner organisations continue to struggle untiringly for the right of all people to health, to comprehensive access to HIV prevention measures, treatment and care, and to support children, women and men affected by HIV and AIDS.

The goal of aidsfocus.ch, the Swiss platform HIV/AIDS and international cooperation, is to "To contribute to improving the HIV and AIDS situation in resource-poor countries" (strategy 2009–2011).

Objective 1: to increase sharing of knowledge and experience and to build synergies among actors in the field of HIV and AIDS and international development.

The annual **aidsfocus.ch conference** in spring is the most important event in aidsfocus.ch's year. It is the place where knowledge and experiences are exchanged and where joint learning takes place. For the meeting in 2011, aidsfocus.ch's partners chose to focus on "HIV, sexuality and youth: Linking HIV and sexual and reproductive health and rights", which is currently the subject of intense international discussions. In the discussions aidsfocus.ch was able to build on concrete experience and insights gathered by partner organisations and their partners in the South and benefit from the expert support from partner organisations, in particular from PLANeS, a member organisation of the Medicus Mundi Switzerland network. We thus once more succeeded in compiling a multi-faceted programme, with renowned speakers from Switzerland, the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and from Southern and West Africa. In the panel discussion with

various stakeholders, including member of parliament Yvonne Gilli, aidsfocus.ch addressed questions concerning advocacy and lobbying.

The expert platform's second event, the **Annual Meeting**, was also designed as a place of exchange and networking. The annual general meeting 2010 focused its spotlight on an analysis of the financial commitments made by Switzerland in relation to international health and HIV. The figures make for sobering reading. Switzerland only spends 7.9% of its entire development cooperation budget on health promotion measures, and a meagre 1% of bilateral aid on activities aimed at prevention, treatment of HIV, support for affected people and mitigation of the effectsⁱⁱ. aidsfocus.ch's partner organisations see it as the platform's task to work towards increasing the importance of HIV measures and health cooperation in Swiss development cooperation, together with the "Lobby for health" working group of the MMS network.

It was business as usual with the **web site** and aidsfocus.news, our "classical" information tools. The electronic newsletter appeared eight times in German French and English between July 2010 and June 2011. Each issue included an up-to-date editorial, information from the Swiss community of practice, news in brief from all parts of the world and new resources and links. Five issues of aidsfocus.flash pointed our readers to forthcoming events. The feedback received on the issues addressed showed that readers both inside and outside the experts' platform appreciate the electronic newsletter.

The **web site www.aidsfocus.ch** and the electronic newsletter are currently being overhauled, both from a technical point of view as well as in terms of content. This will make them more attractive, up-to-date and reader-friendly.

Objective 2: to strengthen skills and capacities and to promote good practice in the field of HIV/AIDS and international cooperation.

With "**Treasure Memories**", a **toolkit for solution-focused memory work**, aidsfocus.ch took on board the need for

practice and implementation-oriented inputs, as expressed by a partner organisation. Together with terre des hommes schweiz aidsfocus.ch designed the toolkit and thus explicitly linked the memory work approach with the solution-focused approach for the first time. aidsfocus.ch had an exhibition booth at the International AIDS conference in Vienna in July 2010, where it sought to market the new toolkit and establish new contacts. The booth and the toolkit enabled aidsfocus.ch to raise its profile, even though it was but one amongst very many organisations represented.

Marketing the "Treasure Memories" toolkit remains on our agenda for 2011. Attention will be drawn to the toolkit through articles and talks. Thanks to a supporting contribution from Swiss AIDS Federation, aidsfocus.ch can provide the toolkit to individuals from Africa and other countries of the South free of charge and thus enable them to use it. In September 2011 aidsfocus.ch supported the implementation of solution-focused memory work by facilitating a training of trainers workshop in Uganda, together with NGO partners of CO-OPERAID and the the Swiss Catholic Women's League in Uganda.

In July 2010 aidsfocus.ch organised a **Meeting Point** together with the Swiss Red Cross (SRC). Jabu Mthethwa from Swaziland, an experienced expert and counsellor in the context of HIV and AIDS, reported on the "Benefits, challenges and limitation of counselling". 15 people, SRC employees and guests, attended the meeting, where the concrete and solution-focused exchanges engaged in provided valuable impulses.

Another Meeting Point took place on the initiative of FEPA. It was titled "Good food – good health. The relevance of nutrition for people living with HIV and AIDS". Farai Mahaso of Batanai (Zimbabwe) discussed concrete experiences and measures that enable people living with HIV to good food.

Objective 2: to create awareness and to mobilize commitment, and to ensure access for all to comprehensive prevention, treatment, care and support, in recognition of the human right to health and life.

As mentioned above, the aidsfocus.ch conference also included a development policy and health policy dimension. aidsfocus.ch's partners agreed on the position that a) HIV and AIDS should be linked more to sexual and reproductive health, and b) that aidsfocus.ch, together with the Medicus Mundi Switzerland network, should work towards achieving an increase in Switzerland's contribution to health in general and to HIV/AIDS and to sexual and reproductive health in particular. This information was disseminated through a media release, but it hardly aroused any response from the media.

On the occasion of World AIDS Day on 1 December, aidsfocus.ch attempted to draw attention to the international dimension of the AIDS epidemic and human rights through a media release addressing the fact that "Switzerland is not doing enough against AIDS worldwide". But the Swiss media reported primarily on AIDS problems in Switzerland and largely ignored the international dimension. aidsfocus.ch was able to address staff members of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and guests with an input on solution-focused memory work on the occasion of SDC's World AIDS Day event.

In Switzerland's new AIDS policy, the National Programme for HIV and Other Sexually Transmitted Infections 2011–2017 (NPHS), the international dimension only receives a mention in the long version. aidsfocus.ch is explicitly named as an important Swiss player in the international struggle to combat the AIDS epidemic.

Media review

Gesundheitssysteme und Aidsprogramme im Widerspruch? (only in German – Health systems and AIDS programmes in conflict?). Interview with Helena Zweifel in "soziale medizin", 3/10.

interportal: News flashes on the Memory Work toolkit, between 20 and 24 July 2010.

World AIDS Conference: Mit Erinnerungsbarbeit die Zukunft gestalten (only in German – Creating the future through memory work). On: interportal, 8 July 2010.

Studie zu Aids: Versprechen sind nicht genug! (only in German – AIDS study. Promises

are not enough!). On: interportal, 23 July 2010.

Franco Brunner: "Die Schweiz könnte sich noch etwas stärker engagieren" (only in German – Switzerland could increase its commitment). Interview with Jochen Ehmer in "Die Südostschweiz", 3 December 2010.

"Die Schweiz macht zu wenig gegen Aids auf der Welt" (only in German – Switzerland is not doing enough against AIDS worldwide). aidsfocus.ch media release, on: interportal 1 December 2010.

A series of news flashes on the aidsfocus.ch conference, April 2011, on interportal.ch (German and French).

Viera Malach: "Aids- und Empfängnisverhütung rettet Leben" (only in German – AIDS prevention and contraception save lives). In "InfoSüd" and "St. Galler Tagblatt", 8 April 2011.

Viera Malach: "Für Aids-Vorbeugung braucht man Sexualaufklärung" (only in German – AIDS prevention requires sex education). In "Welt-Sichten", No. 5, 2011.

Helena Zweifel: "Aidsprävention and Sexualaufklärung retten zusammen Leben" (only in German – AIDS prevention and sex education together save lives). In "soziale medizin", 02/11.

Helena Zweifel: "Recht auf Gesundheit: Auch für junge Frauen" (only in German – The right to health: Also for young women). Editorial, in: "Mediaplanet", 24 May 2011 (Supplement in the newspaper "Tages-Anzeiger").

Annual accounts

The annual accounts are for the 2010 calendar year. aidsfocus.ch spent less than budgeted, but also generated less income. The overhaul of the web site was postponed to 2011. The production of the "Treasure Memories" toolkit cost slightly less. aidsfocus.ch was able to balance the budget, thanks to the CHF 6,000 annual supporting contribution from the Swiss Red Cross and financial support from Swiss AIDS Federation. aidsfocus.ch remains dependent on DEZA's generous financial contribution.

Outlook

When reviewing its strategy, aidsfocus.ch's steering committee will address the option of extending the experts' platform to HIV and sexual and

reproductive health and rights. Extending the subject matter covered in such a way would correspond to the current international debate, but it would have to be carried out in coordination with aidsfocus.ch's partner organisations.

Together with the Medicus Mundi Switzerland network, aidsfocus.ch will intervene in and lobby on the debates on the Swiss government policy on international cooperation for 2013–2016, in order to ensure that HIV and AIDS remain on the development policy agenda.

aidsfocus.ch will continue to make intense efforts to ensure financial sustainability in the coming year too.

Helena Zweifel
aidsfocus.ch coordinator and managing director of Medicus Mundi Switzerland

aidsfocus.ch's partner organisations:

Afro-European Medical and Research Network (AEMRN), AIDS&Child, Berne Declaration, Caritas Switzerland, cinfo, CO-OPERAID, Fédération Genevoise de Coopération, FEPA, Gemeinschaft der St. Anna Schwestern, HEKS, IAMANEH Switzerland, Interteam, Kindernothilfe Schweiz, medico international schweiz, mediCuba-Suisse, missio, mission 21, MIVA Switzerland, Swiss AIDS Care International, Swiss AIDS Federation, Swiss Lenten Fund/Fastenopfer, Swiss Red Cross, Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Swiss TPH), SolidarMed, TearFund, Terre des hommes Foundation, terre des hommes schweiz and World Vision Switzerland.

Steering committee members:

Vreni Wenger (Medicus Mundi Switzerland), Daniel Bruttin (Swiss AIDS Federation), Rao Satapati (CO-OPERAID), Kate Molesworth (Swiss TPH), Tony Jungo (Interteam) and Ignacio Packer (Terre des hommes Foundation, to October 2010).

¹ MMS Contextual Analysis: "Current Trends and Future Challenges in Global and International Health"

ⁱⁱ "Engagement gegen Aids. Versprechen sind nicht genug."
(Only available in German.) A critical assessment of the
realisation of international commitments on HIV/Aids by
Germany, Austria and Switzerland.