

Swiss platform HIV/Aids and international cooperation

Strategic Framework 2006 – 2008

1. Background

1.1. HIV/Aids and International Cooperation – present situation

HIV/AIDS remains a major challenge for the organisations of international cooperation. Today, approx. 40 million people live with HIV/AIDS, more than ever before. About 5 million people are infected every year with the HI-Virus. Especially women and children are vulnerable and exposed to special risks. HIV/Aids threatens the overall development of entire regions in Africa and increasingly also in Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America. The resources of families, communities and governments are eroded and family structures as well as society are deeply changed.

In the last years, the treatment of people with HIV/AIDS has made important progress, in particular as a result of the „3 by 5“ initiative: „Treat 3 million by 2005“ is the global target of the World Health Organisation (WHO) to provide antiretroviral treatment (ART) to 3 million people with HIV/AIDS in low- und middle income countries by the end of 2005. Whereas in Europe HIV/AIDS has developed into a chronic illness, approx. 3 million people died from AIDS-related illnesses in the year 2004, most of them in the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. A mere 12% of people needing treatment have actually access to antiretroviral treatment.

The multilateral and international organisations increasingly understand that a comprehensive multisectoral approach is required to fight HIV/AIDS. Also, the efforts to improve prevention have been strengthened in the last years (UNAIDS Policy Position Paper on Prevention 2005). On the one hand, the possibilities of treatment encourage better prevention, on the other hand, high-level HIV-prevention is essential to make HIV/AIDS-treatment affordable and sustainable. Only then it is possible to slow down the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Yet, HIV/AIDS is still troubled by taboos and silence, people living with HIV/AIDS are stigmatised and the illness is concealed – all preventing an open discussion within the society and thus also complicating an effective prevention and comprehensive treatment and care.

On a global level, there are more funds available to fight HIV/AIDS today, even if it does not correspond to the promises and does by far not cover the requirement. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) already adopted a specific AIDS-policy in 2002 and made HIV/AIDS a priority and transversal task. In the national HIV/AIDS-Program 2004-2008, the Swiss Federal Government concedes a central role to international cooperation. Faced with the extent of the problem in the field, a number of Swiss NGOs have responded to the challenge. Many organisations have established specific HIV-prevention and home-based care programs, introduced ARV-treatment and/or the support of AIDS-affected children („AIDS orphans“). They may also try to integrate issues and activities on HIV/AIDS into their organisations, programs and projects („Mainstreaming“). Yet, at the same time, the financial resources for development cooperation are constantly reduced, both in the field of official development aid as well as in the generation of donations. Hence, the competition among organisations fighting for the scarce resources and the pressure to be more efficient is on the increase. Many organisations thus see the Swiss platform as a forum to create synergies and strengthen the effectiveness of one's own organisation.

1.2. aidsfocus.ch

aidsfocus.ch was launched at the constituent Meeting in October 2003 and has established itself as *the* Swiss platform HIV/AIDS and international cooperation – a place of information, exchange and dialogue. Today, aidsfocus.ch is seen as „the Swiss reference for the topic, the important organisations nationally are integrated“¹. By the end of 2005, the number of partners that form the Swiss platform will have increased from 12 to 28 – within two years only. These partner organisations originate from very different backgrounds, ranging from medically or church oriented to politically and religiously independent organisations from the German and the French part of Switzerland.

This allowed the different partner organisation to get to know each other and their various activities and approaches and to cooperate on specific issues. aidsfocus.ch has managed to break up the isolation of individual organisations and create new synergies. aidsfocus.ch depends both upon the active cooperation of the participating individuals and organisations in joint tasks and upon the numerous informal and decentralised meetings at which partners exchange information and experiences and cooperate on specific tasks.

Having organised two conferences so far, aidsfocus.ch was able to put new and important issues and approaches on the agenda of the Swiss organisations that are active in international cooperation: Comprehensive treatment and care as well as Memory Work. Though still a small, but nevertheless growing number of organisations implement antiretroviral therapy programs today, as one part of comprehensive treatment and care. With the support of the working group „HIV/AIDS-affected children“, the Swiss platform has introduced Memory Work as an innovative approach of psycho-social support of HIV/AIDS-affected children and adults. Thus, it produced the film „Strength from Remembering“ as its first product. Via the conferences and the public and in-house screening of the film, aidsfocus.ch has contributed to the spread and further development of Memory Work as an approach of psychosocial support of people affected by HIV/AIDS in the South, North, East and in Switzerland.

1.3. New Challenges

In view of the growing dimension of HIV/AIDS worldwide and the tasks that are connected to this for organisations of international cooperation, and in view of the growing number of actors working in this field and the resources that become increasingly scarce, it is absolutely necessary to continue to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the efforts. To be able to create synergies and to counteract potential competition, aidsfocus.ch will organise more „Meeting Points“ or other forms of joint reflection and discussion as well as encourage cooperation opportunities among partners.

In addition, aidsfocus.ch intends to motivate partner organisations and further organisations of international cooperation to integrate HIV/AIDS activities into their projects and deal with HIV/AIDS questions in their work (Mainstreaming). Not the number of projects alone is relevant, but the promotion of good and effective approaches, such as the intensive promotion of „best practices“ in the operational field.

Whereas aidsfocus.ch concentrated on the internal objectives during the phase of its constitution and consolidation, the next three years will be used to develop a better visibility in the public. This includes public events and discussions for a wider public, dialogue with representatives of politics and economy, but also advocacy and lobbying.

For cohesion and outreach of aidsfocus.ch, it will be a great challenge to develop a *joint understanding* of advocacy and lobbying. Some partner organisations repeatedly and explicitly expressed their wish and their need that aidsfocus.ch expresses its position and does advocacy work on issues of HIV/AIDS and international cooperation. Other partners see aidsfocus.ch primarily (if not exclusively) as a place of exchange and information.

¹ Evaluation Report by Mark Schmid, March 2005

aidsfocus.ch takes up the concerns and needs of people living with HIV/AIDS or affected by it in the countries of the South and East and advocates for changes that improve their lives, health and well-being. In what way such an interpretation of advocacy goes beyond public relations work and operational work to also include lobbying public authorities and private enterprises needs to be clarified in a participatory process .

Another challenge consists in securing a sustainable financial base of aidsfocus.ch by targeted and intensified fundraising among partners, foundations and selected representatives of private economy.

2. Goals and Objectives

Goal of the Swiss Platform	2006-2008: Challenges and Objectives
<p>aidsfocus.ch, the Swiss platform HIV/AIDS and international cooperation, works in solidarity with and is committed to improve the health and well-being of people affected by HIV/AIDS, and undertakes efforts to stop the spread of the pandemic as well as seeks to mitigate its negative effects.</p> <p>As Swiss platform HIV/AIDS and international cooperation, aidsfocus.ch serves as a forum for exchanging information and experience between the North and South, the East and West and among the various actors.</p> <p>aidsfocus.ch facilitates the creation and utilisation of synergies among the Swiss actors in relation to the issues of HIV/AIDS, to integrate a knowledge-based approach into the work of these organisations and to strengthen their competences and capacities in the field of HIV/AIDS and international cooperation.</p> <p>In view of a multisectoral approach, the Swiss platform also includes both organisations and institutions that focus on health and general organisations of international cooperation that are affected by HIV/AIDS related issues.</p>	<p>To consolidate, strengthen and further develop the Swiss platform by maintaining its dynamics!</p> <p>Whereas the focus lies on the Swiss organisations that work in the field of international cooperation, there is also the intention to foster the exchange with other national organisations (eg. in the area of migration) and multilateral organisations.</p> <p>To motivate partner organisations to increase their cooperation on a local and regional level.</p>
Specific Objectives of the Swiss Platform	2006-2008: Challenges and Objectives
<p>1. Creating Transparency on Ongoing Activities</p> <p>As the basis of cooperation, the Swiss platform supports a transparent policy of information on the activities of the various actors in the field of HIV/AIDS and international cooperation: Who is doing what where how? aidsfocus.ch offers partner organisations a space to make their international networking visible. The organisations are supported to understand their field of action (the „market“) in a better way.</p>	<p>To provide space in order for partners to voice their needs and experiences</p> <p>In order to prevent potential conflicts among operational partners, possibilities of exchange and cooperation are promoted („Marketplaces“, Meeting Points, electronic Newsletter, etc)</p>

<p>2. Reappraising and Exchanging Experiences</p> <p>The various organisations make different experiences in their work. Exchanging these experiences makes it possible to learn from each other and to explore possibilities of transferring and adapting such experiences. The Swiss platform expects an active participation of its member organisations in the „Community of Practice“(CoP). In addition, it also provides impetus for processing and further developing experiences.</p>	<p>Making good use of the Conference, Meeting Points and Newsletters to learn, share and exchange success stories and lessons learnt from one’s own experience (Capacity building)</p>
<p>3. Providing Processed and Well-accessible Information</p> <p>Those organisations that have no technical or specialised office are particularly interested in getting a quick overview on the latest developments, current scientific discussions, etc. The Swiss platform is a service provider to the partner organisations and responsible for the collecting, sifting, summarising and commenting of specialised articles and sources of information. Hence, all processed information is then made available in a user-friendly way.</p>	<p>Ongoing updating of the website www.aidsfocus.ch, and motivating partners to share in its design and use.</p>
<p>4. Offering Strategic and Operational Alliances</p> <p>On the basis of the aforementioned objectives, the organisations of the Swiss platform may form bilateral or multilateral alliances. These alliances do not bind the other partner organisations or the Swiss platform. However, they may support the individual organisations to improve in their use of resources.</p>	
<p>5. Defining Common Positions</p> <p>The specialised exchange of all the relevant organisations in the field of HIV/AIDS and international cooperation could lead to defining common positions (what are best practices, what needs to be avoided, which rules do we all recognise? etc.). The partner organisations can use these positions as reference point for internal and external purposes, while providing a more distinctive profile to the Swiss activities.</p>	<p>Defining common positions as to clearly defined issues in the framework of the Swiss platform – without impairing the network character of the Swiss platform (eg. Position Papers)</p>
<p>6. Sensitisation and Advocacy for the Issue of HIV/AIDS</p> <p>Among the <i>non-specialised organisations</i>, the awareness on the implications of the issues and problems related to HIV/AIDS in the field of international cooperation is still very limited. One objective of the Swiss platform is to raise awareness regarding this issue among NGOs.</p> <p>It is also important to sensitise a <i>broader public</i> to the</p>	<p>Joint public appearance as Swiss platform, especially in areas where its technical competence and experience creates surplus value.</p> <p>Issue of the Year / Slogan of the Year as red thread for internal and external purposes.</p> <p>Encouraging a dialogue with</p>

<p>concerns of the people affected by HIV/AIDS in the global context. In so doing, the organisations may gain a distinctive profile and trust as accountable, professional users of assistance resources.</p> <p>Advocacy, geared both to <i>official bodies</i> as well as to <i>economic circles</i>, is a long-term objective of the Swiss platform HIV/AIDS.</p>	<p>economic circles and officials as to specific issues.</p>
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3. Constituting Body and Organisation of the Project

3.1. Organisation in Charge

aidsfocus.ch is a project initiated by Medicus Mundi Switzerland (MMS), the Network Health for All, that is presently made up of 42 organisations working in the field of international health.

3.2. Organisations Participating in the Project (“Partners”)

The project is open to members and non-members of the Medicus Mundi Switzerland network alike to actively get involved.

To become a partner of aidsfocus.ch, an organisation has to fill out a form and pay an annual contribution of CHF 500.-. The annual fee is to be partly understood as compensation for the services and efforts of the Swiss platform. However, most of the events are free for an interested public. So, by participating in the project and paying the annual fee, the solidarity with the project idea and its joint ownership is shown. Also individuals can become partners of aidsfocus.ch, their annual contribution is CHF 100.-

Not only those organisations in international health cooperation that specialise in HIV/AIDS are invited to participate and become partners but also those that are active in other fields of development cooperation as well as individuals from the world of international development cooperation, science and politics.

Partner organisations have the possibility to influence the course of the project directly or indirectly by taking part in the annual meeting as well as by electing the Steering Committee. They can also help shape the content of the work by participating in working groups.

3.3. Project Management: Steering Committee

MMS delegates the steering of the project to a Steering Committee in which it is represented with at least one member of the board. The Steering Committee is responsible for the strategic and competent management of the project (strategic planning, evaluation, annual report, annual statement of accounts and budget). The Steering Committee works on a voluntary basis and is formed out of 5 to 9 representatives of organisations with the required capacities to get involved in the work. The Steering Committee meets once or twice a year.

The Steering Committee can delegate certain tasks to a Core Group, in which it is represented by at least one member (representative of the MMS-Board). The Core Group supports the Coordination Office (3.4.) and regularly informs the Steering Committee about its work. Whenever there are important decisions to be taken, it consults with the Steering Committee either by writing or by phone. Members of the Core Group may be compensated for their work with a symbolic sum.

The Annual Meeting of the Swiss platform elects or confirms the members of the Steering Committee.

3.4. Coordination Office

The office of the network Medicus Mundi Switzerland takes on the mandate of providing the technical and administrative services that are required to implement the project. MMS provides the necessary capacities (the time required is budgeted with 125 working days). The MMS-office makes use of synergies created by the participating organisations and utilises existing channels and resources, especially backstopping mandates of SDC.

3.5. Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting provides a forum for partner organisations for a direct exchange. Here, the organisations express their needs and show what they have to offer. The Annual Meeting elects or confirms the Steering Committee and adopts the annual report and the annual statement of accounts as well as the plan of activities and the budget for the current year.

The Steering Committee announces the date of the Annual Meeting in a timely manner. The invitation together with the agenda is then sent out at the latest 20 days prior to the Annual Meeting.

4. Fields of Action

The Swiss platform is conceived in such a way that it guarantees the participation of the various organisations always according to their respective needs and possibilities.

4.1. Collection, Sifting, Electronic Processing and Transfer of Information: Website, [aidsfocus.news](#) and [aidsfocus.flash](#)

Electronic media is a major means of communication of the platform. All information and messages that need no in-depth discussion can easily be exchanged via the net, not requiring special meetings (up-dates as to activities of the organisations; evaluation of conferences; results of surveys, etc.). [aidsfocus.flash](#) plays the role of a „notice board“ with topical news (search for resource persons, guests from the South, etc.).

4.2. Working Groups

The formation of working groups is recommended wherever a direct exchange of participating actors with specialised knowledge and experience enables a deeper discussion and leads to results in the form of widely supported position papers. Working Groups need to have a clear agenda, objectives and deadlines in order to keep its up-to-date nature and priorities with the participants.

The working groups form themselves and have a decentralised structure. They are supported by the Coordination Office as to the content and administration. The Working Groups make available their results to the other organisations involved in the projects.

The annual assembly of the Swiss platform has the right to propose and prioritise the issues for the Working Groups. The Steering Committee then clearly defines the objectives and monitors the work of the Working Groups.

4.3. Conferences

The Swiss platform organises at least one annual conference with the objective to bring together a large number of interested organisations and people for exchanging their

experiences and know-how. Thus, new insights and important positions can be spread and become common ground. In workshops, key issues can be worked out together.

Interesting and content-relevant conferences also serve to win over new actors of international cooperation for the Swiss platform.

4.4. „Meeting Points“

„Meeting Points“ are informal meetings with guests for the exchange of information and experience. Hence, synergies can be created, knowledge can be shared from first hand, suggestions and inputs can be passed on and positions clarified in a process of exchange and discussion.

4.5. Public Relations Work

The *broader public* is little informed and sensitised for the concerns of people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS in the global context. Awareness of the concerns of people affected by HIV/AIDS can be raised by public events of the platform (public meetings, press conferences, articles, etc.); thus, the Swiss platform acquires a strong image in the public.

4.6. Advocacy

In its advocacy work, aidsfocus.ch takes up the concerns and needs of people living with HIV/AIDS or affected by it in the countries of the South and East and advocates for changes that improve their lives, health and well-being. Non-specialised organisations of international cooperation, authorities as well as economic and political players are made aware of the HIV/AIDS-issues.

The partner organisations have to clarify in a participatory process in what way such advocacy work goes beyond public relations and operational work and includes lobbying authorities and private economy.

5. Financing

aidsfocus.ch receives financial support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), its partner organisations, Medicus Mundi Switzerland and other donors (see budget).

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Steering Committee is accountable to the partner organisations and to the donors. It presents the annual report and the annual accounts. Additional reports are written upon request of the donors and follow their formal guidelines.

It is planned to undertake an (internal) evaluation of the Swiss platform, after completion of the three-year project.

The following points serve as indicators to evaluate the performance of aidsfocus.ch:

- Participation of the most important Swiss organisations that are focusing in their core activities on the issues of HIV/AIDS and international cooperation.

- Participation of a representative and growing number of Swiss development NGOs that are confronted by the impact of HIV/AIDS; creation of alliances in view of specific activities of the partner organisations.
- Collaboration and participation of federal authorities that are involved in the issues of HIV/AIDS.
- Partner organisations contribute to the functioning of the platform by working in the bodies of the Swiss platform.
- Broadly supported position papers of aidsfocus.ch on relevant topics related to Swiss politics, HIV/AIDS and international cooperation.
- Results of the working groups: best practices, recommendations for specific areas of international cooperation, etc.
- A growing number of organisations is mainstreaming HIV/AIDS in its programs.
- Pertinence of the Swiss platform for the integration of new insights into the HIV/AIDS-programs of the partner organisations.

Basel, November 16, 2005

Appendix: Budget 2006-2008

Expenditures CHF net*	Budget 2006	Budget 2007	Budget 2008
Internet platform			
Update, hosting and technical support, translations	4'000	4'000	4'000
Coordination office: Collection of information, Website and e-Bulletin (72 working days/year)	54'000	54'000	54'000
Working Groups			
Coordination office: Support of the working groups (22 working days/year)	16'500	16'500	16'500
Organisation of conferences			
Venue, translations, resource persons incl. travel costs	17'000	17'000	17'000
Coordination office: organisation and coordination(16 working days/year)	12'000	12'000	12'000
Further project costs			
Annual project planning meeting: external costs	2'000	2'000	2'000
Public relations and reports: external costs	4'000	4'000	4'000
Steering Committee: Core group	2'000	2'000	2'000
Coordination office: Project administration, public relations, reports, fundraising (15 working days/year)	11'250	11'250	11'250
Projects			
New Projects	10'000	10'000	10'000
Unforeseen expenditure	4'250	4'250	4'250
Evaluation (4 working days)			3'000
Subtotal Coordination office	93'750	93'750	96'750
Subtotal external cost	43'250	43'250	43'250
Total	137'000	137'000	140'000

Revenues CHF			
Contribution MMS	10'000	10'000	13'000
Contributions partners	20'000	20'000	20'000
Contribution SDC	76'000	76'000	76'000
Further contributions (sponsors, conference)	31'000	31'000	31'000
Total	137'000	137'000	140'000

***Net figures: These financials concern only plain income and expenses.** The own work of partner organisations – in particular the time contributed to the working of the project (steering group, working groups, etc.) as well as travel costs for participating in national and international events – is not explicitly shown in the books.