



Minutes of the Annual Meeting of **aidsfocus.ch**, the Swiss platform on HIV/Aids and international cooperation

October 23, 2007, 14.00 p.m. – 16.00 p.m., Kornhausforum, Kornhausplatz, Berne

Agenda

Part 1: Formal Part

1. Minutes of the Annual Meeting 2006
2. Annual Report 2006/07 (till June 2007)
3. Accounts 2006
4. Activities planned for 2008
5. Theme of the **aidsfocus.ch** conference in spring 2008
6. Election / Confirmation of the Steering Committee

Part 2: Sharing of experiences and information

- Declarations of Commitment
- Varia

Participants:

Steering Committee: Vreni Wenger (SRC, Moderation), Rao Satapati (CO-OPERAID), Daniel Bruttin (Swiss AIDS Federation), Coordinator: Helena Zweifel (**aidsfocus.ch**/MMS).

Partners: Ulrich Bachmann (TearFund), Esther Bodenmann (World Vision Switzerland), Frank Boshold (Kindernothilfe Schweiz), Irene Bush (terre des hommes Switzerland, Kwa Wazee), Silvia Keller (AIDS & Child), Monika Kämpf (SRC), Andreas Loebell (terre des hommes Switzerland), Brian MacCall (Fédération Genevoise de Coopération), Barbara Müller (FEPA), Helen Prytherch (STI), Barbara Schär.

MMS: Martina Staenke (Minutes).

Guests: Sandra Bernasconi (SDC), Hans Binswanger (Cepas Trust).

Apologies: Irene Abderhalden (Int. Federation Blue Cross), Emma Amadò (Médecins sans Frontières), Thomas Gass (SolidarMed), Claudia Kessler (STI), Jochen Kirsch (mission 21), David Mayer, Michèle Morier-Genoud (HEKS/EPER), Maya Natarajan (IAMANEH), Ignacio Packer (Terre des hommes Foundation), Gail Hunter (FGC), Romy Mathys (LHIVE), Mark Moser (Int. Federation Blue Cross), Valentin Prélaz (Swiss Interchurch Aid/EPER), Julien Reinhard (Berne Declaration), Thomas Schwarz (Medicus Mundi Switzerland), Lucy Serena (ASFAG), Stefan Siebenhaar (Bethlehem Mission Immensee), Christa Spycher (PLANeS).

Welcome

Vreni Wenger, member of the steering committee, welcomes the participants in the name of **aidsfocus.ch** and leads through the meeting. 12 of 33 partner organisations are present as well as a representative from SDC.

Part 1: Formal Part

1. Minutes of the Annual Meeting, November 15, 2006

The minutes are approved.

2. Annual Report 2006/ 07 (till June 2007)

The annual report is approved.

3. Accounts 2006

The coordinator reports that aidsfocus.ch did quite fine and income and expenses are balanced. The contributions from partner organisations are growing. Additional income was generated by the project Memory Work due to the sale of the DVD, the toolkit and the contribution by terre des hommes schweiz. The coordinator gives special thanks to SDC for the generous contribution of CHF 72,000. - annually, the Swiss Red Cross for an annual contribution of CHF 6,000.- and the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health for the support of the conference.

The accounts 2006 are approved.

4. Activities planned for 2008

- Annual conference in April
- Meeting Points with guests
- Website and aidsfocus.news
- Peer group Mainstreaming HIV
- Self-evaluation of aidsfocus.ch, and negotiation of the new contract with SDC

Questions and discussion:

Meeting points: A guest for a meeting point could be Lotti Latrous who lives in the slums of Abijan (Côte d'Ivoire), caring for people living and dying with AIDS. She was honoured with the "Swiss Award" 2004 for her work. The third book on Lotti Latrous was just published. Lotti Latrous would be interested in sharing of experiences.

A participant proposes to invite Stefan German for a meeting point. Stefan is one of the founding members of REPSSI, worked as global advisor on orphans and vulnerable children for World Vision International in South Africa and is back in Switzerland. Another participant suggests to invite a person back from the field or on home leave to share first hand experience from the field on ART.

The question of the „**Working Groups**“ is raised: It is commented that the only WG that works well are those created to guide the preparation of the Symposium. The lack of strong, self-dependent WGs is identified as a weakness of aidsfocus.ch

The electronic forum installed on the website is not used for discussion. Experience shows that in Switzerland, people prefer to meet face-to-face, to phone or to send an e-mail. There

are quite a few international discussion forums which people could join. aidsfocus.news informs about recent ones.

A participant suggested to contact other European platforms on HIV and AIDS in order to share experiences and learn from each other. The coordinator will take up this idea.

5. Theme of the aidsfocus.ch Conference in Spring 2008

The coordinator introduces the two themes proposed by the Steering Committee. Though the decision of the Annual Meeting 2006 on topic 1 should be respected, a second important topic is proposed for discussion and decision:

1) AIDS, property rights and life perspectives of women and children

Children's rights to inheritance are often violated even while the mother is still alive and becomes more severe when both parents have died. The relatives are the first to gain access to the property. Some issues and challenges are to be discussed at the Conference: Women's access to land, traditional and modern law; livelihoods and women's rights violations; protection of children's rights to their inheritance (birth registration, making a will, legal advice, community support); community based initiatives; experiences of Swiss development organisations.

2) Stigma, life perspectives and social environment (Focus on disclosure)

"Disclosure is the first step in breaking down HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination". PLWHA can significantly impact on attitudes to HIV, and are thus important in overcoming stigma and discrimination. Some issues and challenges to be discussed at the Conference: Key role of PLWHA in overcoming stigma and discrimination, societal benefits of disclosure vs. personal benefits and risk, helping with disclosure, disclosure within health care settings.

Discussion: The relevance of both the suggestions is acknowledged and a discussion ensues. Some members advocate particularly for topic 1 on the basis of the experience of their organisation. Specifically organisations which work with children are often confronted with complex issues around property rights – especially when inhabitants migrate from rural areas into towns. The topic property rights can be seen as a general challenge affecting women above all and not only in relation to HIV/AIDS. Stigma and discrimination continue to pose a major obstacle for those living with HIV – despite extensive health education efforts.

Further themes were also raised which the coordinator noted as possible topics for the 2009 conference or for a meeting point.

a) ARV treatment and poverty: How can/should organisations advise their partners in poor areas where access to health services and medication hardly function in normal circumstances and people's income barely provides enough to eat.

b) Migration and HIV/AIDS

c) Relationship between agriculture and AIDS

d) Sexuality as the big taboo, and questions linked to values and ethics.

Decision: The [aidsfocus](http://aidsfocus.ch) Conference of April 2008 will be devoted to the issue of **„AIDS, property rights and life perspectives of women and children“** (10 against 3 votes).
Date of the Conference: April 10, 2008.

The coordinator invites all interested parties to join the accompanying group for the preparations for the Conference.

6. Election / Confirmation of the Steering Committee

The following members stand up for re-election: Vreni Wenger (Swiss Red Cross), Emma Amadò (MSF), Ignacio Packer, (Terre des hommes Foundation), Claudia Kessler (Swiss Tropical Institute), Rao Satapati (CO-OPERAID) and Daniel Bruttin (Swiss AIDS Federation). Romy Mathys, positive activist, resigned in September 2007. Lucy Serena, Association Solidarité Femmes Africaines de Genève (ASFAG), is proposed to join as a guest.

Decision: All present-day members are unanimously confirmed in their office. Lucy Serena (who could not be present) is elected as a full member of the Steering Committee (Note: Lucy Serena accepted her election). A round of applause expresses the participants' gratitude for the commitment of all members of the Steering Committee.

Part 2: Sharing of experiences and information

7. Declaration of Commitment

In the last two years aidsfocus.ch formulated at the Conference 2006 the "Declaration of Commitment: Young People have the Right to Knowledge and Services" and 2007 the "Declaration of Commitment: Towards a future generation without HIV and AIDS".

The participants are invited to discuss the following questions: How did you share these declarations within your organisation and how did you integrate them into your work, with which experiences? What are the challenges? Are the declarations useful?

Discussion: On the positive side it was noted that through the Declarations the individual members and organisations can be sensitised on the particular topics. It is seen by everyone to be much harder to transparently demonstrate the changes this generates externally, or to show how the Declarations have been used for lobbying and awareness raising. The question on the overall usefulness of the Declarations was not finally decided. It was, however, agreed that a Declaration may not be needed for every conference.

8. Varia

Sandra Bernasconi reports that SDC is updating the AIDS Strategy and will invite aidsfocus.ch and other civil society organisations to be involved in the process. A draft will be ready before the End of 2007.

9. Thanks and farewell

Vreni Wenger from the Steering Committee and the coordinator express their thanks to all participants for their coming and for their inputs "in the music".

For the minutes:

Basel, November 2007

*Martina Staenke
Medicus Mundi Switzerland*

*Helena Zweifel
aidsfocus.ch*