



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

October 26, 2010, 13.45 p.m. – 16.45 p.m., Swiss Red Cross, Rainmattstrasse 10, Berne

Agenda

Part 1: Official business (13.45 – 15.00)

- 1. Minutes of the 2009 Annual Meeting**
- 2. Annual Report 2009/10 (to the end of July 2010)**
- 3. Accounts 2009**
- 4. Activities planned for 2011**
- 5. Theme of the aidsfocus.ch conference in spring 2011**
- 6. Election / confirmation of members of the Steering Committee**
- 7. Miscellaneous**

Part 2: Sharing of experiences und discussion (15.20 – 16.45)

Promises are not enough – our expectations and demands. With an input by Joachim Rüppel (author of the Action against AIDS study) and a discussion.

Participants:

Steering Committee: Vreni Wenger (SRC), Rao Satapati (CO-OPERAID), Kate Molesworth (SwissTPH), Tony Jungo (INTERTEAM), Coordinator: Helena Zweifel (aidsfocus.ch/MMS)

Partners: Patrick Durisch (Berne Declaration), Stefan Hoffmann (Kwa Wazee), Linus G. Jauslin (Aids & Kind), Barbara Müller (FEPA), David Schwitter (World Vision Switzerland), Isabelle Vianden (TearFund), Verena Wieland (Swiss Red Cross)

MMS: Martina Staenke (minutes)

Guests: Alexandre von Kessel (SDC), Joachim Rüppel (Action against AIDS)

Apologies: Daniel Bruttin (Swiss AIDS Federation) Irene Bush (terre des hommes switzerland), Maria Diaz (miva Schweiz), Gabriele Hansch (Swiss Red Cross), Franziska Lauper (terre des homes switzerland), Yanik Marguerat (Federation genevoise de coopération), Joel Meir (SolidarMed), Maya Natarajan (IAMANEH), Ignacio Packer (Terre des hommes Foundation), Veronique Schöffel (cinfo), Maria Winiger (Caritas Schweiz).

Welcome

Helena Zweifel, the coordinator of aidsfocus.ch, welcomed the participants in the name of aidsfocus.ch and chaired the assembly. 10 of 30 partners were present, as well as representatives from SDC, Action against AIDS and MMS.

Part 1: Official business

1. Minutes of the Annual Meeting, December 1, 2009

The minutes were approved.

2. Annual Report 2009/10 (to the end of July 2010)

Helena Zweifel gave a brief overview of the most important events in the latest period, as described in the annual report. With regard to the enriching discussions held at the last two Meeting Points, which were initiated by partner organisations, she encouraged the participants to inform her when they have guests from the South, in order to organise a joint event.

The annual report was approved.

3. Accounts 2009

The coordinator pointed out that more funds were budgeted for the production of the new toolkit "Treasure memories" than were actually spent and raised in 2009. The other expenses and incomes are balanced.

Discussion concerning the marketing of the toolkit: The question arose concerning how many of the 2,000 toolkits produced by aidsfocus.ch and terre des hommes switzerland were sold at the World AIDS Conference. The coordinator explained that sales activities in Vienna were much below our expectations. Linus Jauslin confirmed that AIDS 2010 was not a good place for selling.

For the further marketing of the toolkit, aidsfocus.ch also relies on its partners to sell or distribute them to their partners in the South. However, the toolkit cannot be distributed free of cost, as Rao Satapati proposed. It can be sold to organisations from middle and low income countries at half price (CHF 20). Vreni Wenger stated that the toolkit should not be given away for free, as this would not do justice to its great value.

Kate Molesworth suggested uploading the material on the website and thus increasing access. It was argued that this is not the appropriate marketing strategy for the moment, as aidsfocus.ch depends on refinancing the expenditures. Linus Jauslin recommended getting in contact with the Southern African Network of AIDS Service Organisations (SANASO) for further dissemination. Helena Zweifel is looking for foundations which would fund the distribution of the toolkit in the South. At World AIDS Day she will present the toolkit at an event organised by SDC.

The accounts 2009 were approved.

4. Activities planned for 2011

- Annual Conference in April 2011
- 2 Meeting Points
- Website, aidsfocus.news and social media
- Marketing toolkit "Treasure memories" (see point 3: Accounts 2009)
- Advocacy
- Interviews with partners on interests, expectations and commitment, new projects

Website, aidsfocus.news and social media

There are plans to rework the website in 2011. The electronic newsletter aidsfocus.news/aidsfocus.nouvelles will continue as before, and aidsfocus.ch will additionally experiment with social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, etc., as tools for sharing information more dynamically.

Interviews with partners on interests, expectations and commitment, new projects

For the beginning of 2011 the coordinator is planning to conduct interviews with partner organisations, mainly on the following topics: What could/should aidsfocus.ch do differently? What are partners' needs, interests, expectations and contributions? New projects in 2011 would have to be financed by partners and others.

5. Theme of the aidsfocus.ch conference in spring 2011

This time the steering group proposed only one topic:

Reproductive and sexual health and rights, HIV and AIDS - policy and practice

As was already discussed at the last aidsfocus.ch conference, there is a tendency to move away from disease-specific intervention towards broader and more holistic approaches. At the international level there is an intense discussion under way, and the Global Fund is enlarging its commitment to mother and child health issues. At the local level many partner organisations have also already integrated reproductive health and rights with HIV in their project work.

There are still many challenges remaining, however. HIV prevention and testing is often integrated into family planning clinics, thus focusing only on women, leaving out vulnerable groups such as men who have sex with men (MSM), sex workers or young people.

aidsfocus.ch will also raise the question of enlarging its focus and including reproductive and sexual health and rights amongst its fields of activity. This needs to be discussed with the partners. The conference in spring would be one step in the process.

Discussion: For Barbara Müller it was evident that aidsfocus.ch has to deal with this topic, as it is currently being discussed at the international level and we have to define our position. The main challenge will be how to integrate young people in this approach. Alexandre von Kessel mentioned two examples of the new tendency: SDC is reinforcing the relation between HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health, and the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health has renamed its AIDS section and now calls it the office of "prevention and promotion".

David Schwitter pointed out that the topic is in line with World Vision's practices, as they have increased their focus on reproductive health issues. Rao Satapati pleaded for the inclusion of sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs) in the title, and Linus Jauslin reminded the meeting of the increasing incidence of STDs even in Switzerland. Verena Wieland welcomed a broad definition that makes it possible to look at the issue from different perspectives.

Decision: The aidsfocus.ch conference on April 7, 2011 will be devoted to the issue of "Reproductive and sexual health and rights, HIV and AIDS - policy and practice".

Helena Zweifel invited all interested parties to join the advisory group, which will meet twice to prepare the conference. The Swiss Red Cross is interested in taking part. Linus Jauslin will contribute with contacts from St. Petersburg. Other interested parties are also welcome.

6. Election / Confirmation of the Steering Committee

The following members stood for re-election to the Steering Committee: Vreni Wenger (Swiss Red Cross), Rao Satapati (CO-OPERAID), Daniel Bruttin (Swiss AIDS Federation), Kate Molesworth (Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute) and Tony Jungo (INTERTEAM)

Ignacio Packer (Terre des hommes Foundation) resigned from the Steering Committee. It would be appreciated if a person from the French-speaking part of Switzerland and/or a HIV-positive person with knowledge of international cooperation activities were to join the Steering Committee.

Decision: All current members were unanimously confirmed in office.

The coordinator thanked the members of the Steering Committee for their valuable support.

Part 2: Sharing of experiences and discussion

Promises are not enough – our expectations and demands. In cooperation with the German and the Austrian Action against AIDS (Aktionsbündnis gegen Aids), aidsfocus.ch produced an alternative report on the financial promises of the respective governments and the realities of international cooperation in health and HIV. The document is only available in German and is entitled "Engagement gegen Aids. Versprechen sind nicht genug".

The presentation by Joachim Rüppel focused mainly on the question of **the financial contribution of Switzerland to the international response to the HIV pandemic**. On the basis of the three levels analysed – overall development cooperation, health promotion and specific interventions in the response to HIV – Joachim Rüppel explained the volume of official development assistance (ODA) from donor countries (slide 6). In the analysis a distinction was made between official financial commitments made by governments, and actual disbursement, which usually differ significantly (slide 5).

Original calculations by the millennium project: The calculations are based on an action plan developed by the United Nations, taking into account all key development areas to implement the millennium development goals (MDGs). By means of country studies it has been calculated what contribution each country has to make in order to reach these goals. Consequently, industrialised countries should provide investments of 178 billion US dollars in 2010, representing 0.43% of their gross national income (GNI). About a quarter of these total investments – currently 33.5 billion US dollars – should flow into health promotion (slide 12). Country-defined targets for universal access financing needs for HIV services in 2010 amount to about 26 billion US dollars, according to UNAIDS. Out of this amount, the rich donor countries should raise two-thirds (slide 11 and 12). Joachim Rüppel regretted that most donor countries are far away from these commitments.

Swiss expenditure: The Swiss rate is well below the targets. The official statistic (0.47%) have been embellished with items such as debt relief, imputed students' costs, costs for refugees in donor countries or administrative costs, all of which represent no real resource transfer to the disadvantaged countries (slide 13). If these items are deducted, then Switzerland's real expenditure for ODA in 2009 amounted to only 0.35% of GNI (slide 14).

Compared to its prevailing economic power, it would be appropriate for Switzerland to contribute 1.5% to health-related development aid (slide 12). This would mean that up to 580 million Swiss francs should be raised for the promotion of health, of which 270 million Swiss francs would be attributed to HIV control. A differentiated analysis, however, shows that Switzerland has only invested 128 million Swiss francs (2008) in international health cooperation, which corresponds to only 7.5% of ODA for international health. Concerning investment in specific HIV intervention, there is no increase in the whole reporting period (four years). Thus the real Swiss HIV response disbursement amounted to only CHF 35 million Swiss francs in 2007 and CHF 37 million Swiss francs in 2008 – an amount equivalent to a mere 1% of bilateral aid. An adequate contribution level would have been 211 million Swiss francs in 2009 and 270 million Swiss francs in 2010 – seven to eight times more than the real level (slide 24).

There is a kind of compensation through multilateral contributions. If we include that expenditure, then the HIV share in relation to total development cooperation expenditure is

doubled (2.2%). In relation to GNI it is only 0.007% (slide 21). A great weakness is seen in the very modest Swiss contribution to the Global Fund (slide 20 and 21).

Examining the composition of HIV contributions in the bilateral area, we saw that there were two striking aspects. The first is that reproductive health projects are practically non-existent. The other point is that the increase in bilateral aid is owed mainly to the extension of the financing of sector-wide programmes, whereas disbursement for specific HIV intervention decreases in 2008 compared to 2005 (slide 22). It is problematic that HIV prevention measures, even though they take place in other sectors, are added to the estimate of financial needs in healthcare (e.g. HIV prevention and sexual education in schools).

To summarise, there is a huge gap in the case of the overall ODA to reach the target figure, which would mean 0.5% of GNI. But in proportional terms the gap in the ODA contributions to health promotion and especially to the HIV response is much higher. There is more or less stagnation in the relation to GNI, and no increase in the effort to contribute more to the international HIV response.

Discussion: What shall aidsfocus.ch do to remind the Swiss government of its commitment and make it act accordingly?

The participants were quite shocked by these appalling figures, as until now they had been convinced that the Swiss contribution to health promotion stood at 10%. Alexandre von Kessel pointed out that in the new "Botschaften" 2013-2016, SDC has a strong interest to bring health to a better position and to contribute more to the WHO and to the Global Fund. In the new paper from SDC for 2011, HIV will retain an important position.

Verena Wieland underlined the fact that she would be very interested in an open discussion with SDC about these results. For Patrick Durisch the study is an important tool for advocacy and he stated that he was not surprised by the figures. He came to the same conclusion on account of his analysis – though less extensive – of public funding on research and development on drugs for neglected diseases. The Swiss contribution to this is only 3 million Swiss francs per year, which is not acceptable.

As a next step, the coordinator proposed a media conference before World AIDS Day 2010. Vreni Wenger recommended discussions with SDC first. Joachim Rüppel mentioned that it might also be reasonable to wait for the official ODA figures, which will be published in December.

Helena Zweifel emphasised that aidsfocus.ch and the network Medicus Mundi Switzerland already do advocacy work for the increase of ODA to 0.7% and the promotion of the relevance of health cooperation and the HIV response in the "Botschaften" 2013-2016. The aidsfocus.ch conference 2010 was dedicated to this topic, and the Steering Committee discussed the issue at its last meeting. A lobby group within the Medicus Mundi network, consisting of several network members and the coordinator, is advocating making health a priority issue on the agenda of the new government policies ("Botschaften"). The consultation process in the formulation of the "Botschaften" for 2013-2016 will start this fall and aidsfocus.ch wants to be part of it.

Decision: Dialog with SDC (January 2011), short version of the study (fact sheet) and press release on the occasion of World AIDS Day (December 1, 2010), and participation in the consultation process on the new government policies.

For the minutes:

Basel, December 2010

*Martina Staenke
Medicus Mundi Switzerland*