

COOPERATION FRAMEWORK

1. This Cooperation Framework between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) is intended to further strengthen cooperation between the two institutions for the benefit of persons of concern to UNHCR, including refugees, returnees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons on whose behalf UNHCR has been authorized to act, and stateless persons. It builds on the recognized expertise of each institution and seeks to establish operational and practical modalities of cooperation in the global fight against the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) in order to reduce transmission of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) among those persons of concern to UNHCR.

2. Underlying this Cooperation Framework is the recognition of the respective mandates and responsibilities of each institution, and of the need to build on the comparative advantages of each in arrangements for cooperation that provide added value both for the beneficiaries and for the discharge of these mandates and responsibilities. In this regard, the two institutions are committed to mobilize and effect a broad-based response to the problem posed to persons of concern to UNHCR by HIV, which continues to spread around the world, insinuating itself into communities previously little troubled by the epidemic, and strengthening its grip on areas where AIDS is already the leading cause of death in adults.

3. The Statute of UNHCR mandates the Office to assume the function of providing international protection to refugees and of seeking permanent solutions to refugee problems. Within the United Nations system, UNHCR is thus responsible for the protection and welfare of refugees, and for helping to find durable solutions through voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement in third countries.

4. UNAIDS has been given the primary task of mobilizing a broad-based response to the global health and development challenges posed by HIV/AIDS. The HIV epidemic has reached every country in the world; over 90 percent of HIV-infected people live in the developing countries where the majority of today's refugees are found. Conflict and war result in the forced migration of people, leaving them in conditions that exacerbate vulnerability to HIV/AIDS.

In the interest of promoting smooth and productive collaboration between UNAIDS and UNHCR, the following principles will govern this relationship in order to define specific mechanisms that will facilitate collaboration and cooperation. Since UNAIDS and UNHCR constitute centres of expertise for the UN system in their respective fields of endeavour, specialists from the two institutions will collaborate directly, both at Headquarters and in the field.

6. Direct collaboration between the two institutions is especially important at the field level, as a means of ensuring the inclusion in technical cooperation activities of effective and sustainable preventive measures against HIV/AIDS.

7. At the country level, UNAIDS works through United Nations Theme Groups on HIV/AIDS, Country Programme Advisers, and Intercountry Teams, while UNHCR has a network of Field Representatives at the country and regional levels. In its effort to lead the expanded response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, UNAIDS works in partnership with

governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the business sector as well as its six cosponsors (UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank), and regional and international bodies. In its efforts to protect refugees and to promote solutions to their problems, UNHCR works in partnership with governments, regional organizations, international organizations and NGOs. All these partners constitute vital links for the facilitation and development of an effective cooperation network.

8. UNAIDS and UNHCR will formally advise their respective teams of field staff of the current «Cooperation Framework» and will provide appropriate additional guidance for cooperation at the field level. Both UNHCR and UNAIDS are fully committed to collaborating and working with the UN Country Teams, which offer opportunities to systematize the exchange of expertise and to develop joint initiatives and strategic planning. In this context, both UNHCR and UNAIDS will participate actively, where appropriate, in the UN Theme Groups established to deal with HIV/AIDS.

9. In order to facilitate the identification and development of best practices focused on reducing the risk and vulnerability to HIV/AIDS of persons of concern to UNHCR, UNHCR and UNAIDS will jointly develop a yearly work plan. This work plan will focus, among others, on the following objectives and activities:

- a. Ensure that the work with persons of concern to UNHCR incorporates HIV/AIDS activities as detailed in the joint UNHCR/UNAIDS/WHO Guidelines for HIV Interventions in Emergency Settings, Inter-agency Field Manual on Reproductive Health in Refugee Situations, and in the UNAIDS Best Practice Guidelines. The success will be measured by an increase in HIV/AIDS interventions in UNHCR programming activities and in the identification and dissemination of best practices.
- b. Identify technical resource networks at regional and country levels.
- c. Increase the level of local technical expertise on HIV/AIDS-related issues through training and study visits jointly organized by UNHCR and UNAIDS.
- d. Increase joint identification, documentation, and promotion of best practices to be considered at policy level, implemented within planned and existing activities, and disseminated in the form of technical materials and case studies from the field.
- e. UNAIDS will participate in the review and revision of the 1998 UNHCR Internal Policy on Refugees and AIDS.
- f. UNAIDS will provide appropriate technical assistance in HIV/AIDS prevention and care, as and when requested by UNHCR.

10. UNHCR is responsible for the international protection and welfare of refugees, which may include the provision of assistance, including health care, in cooperation with host governments. The implementation of UNHCR assistance projects is normally entrusted to implementing partners, which are often NGOs. In addition, UNAIDS is prepared to provide technical assistance to UNHCR initiatives that incorporate HIV/AIDS-related issues. Such arrangements will also be made whenever appropriate with regard to the evaluation of projects or activities which concern both HIV/AIDS and persons of concern to UNHCR.

11. As civil society has a role in the implementation of the mandates of UNHCR and UNAIDS, both institutions emphasize the importance of working closely with NGOs. Both institutions will make every effort to facilitate the identification of joint NGO partners to work in communities where the refugee and/or displaced persons and HIV/AIDS problems are closely linked. It is imperative that both UNAIDS and UNHCR support local and international agencies working to ensure that the HIV/AIDS programme needs of the local host population are addressed.

12. UNAIDS and UNHCR will continue the practice of regular attendance at the meetings of each other's governing bodies, inter-agency coordination meetings and working level technical meetings in areas of mutual concern.

13. In order to permit a regular review of the «Cooperation Framework» and to encourage a regular consultation process, a one-day meeting will be convened at least once a year, alternating between UNHCR's Division of Operational Support (DOS) at Headquarters and the UNAIDS Secretariat.

14. This Cooperation Framework will take effect on the date of signature indicated below. It may be revised at the request of either party.

Peter Piot
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Joint United Nations Programme
on HIV/AIDS
Geneva, 27 November 1998

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Geneva, 27 November 1998